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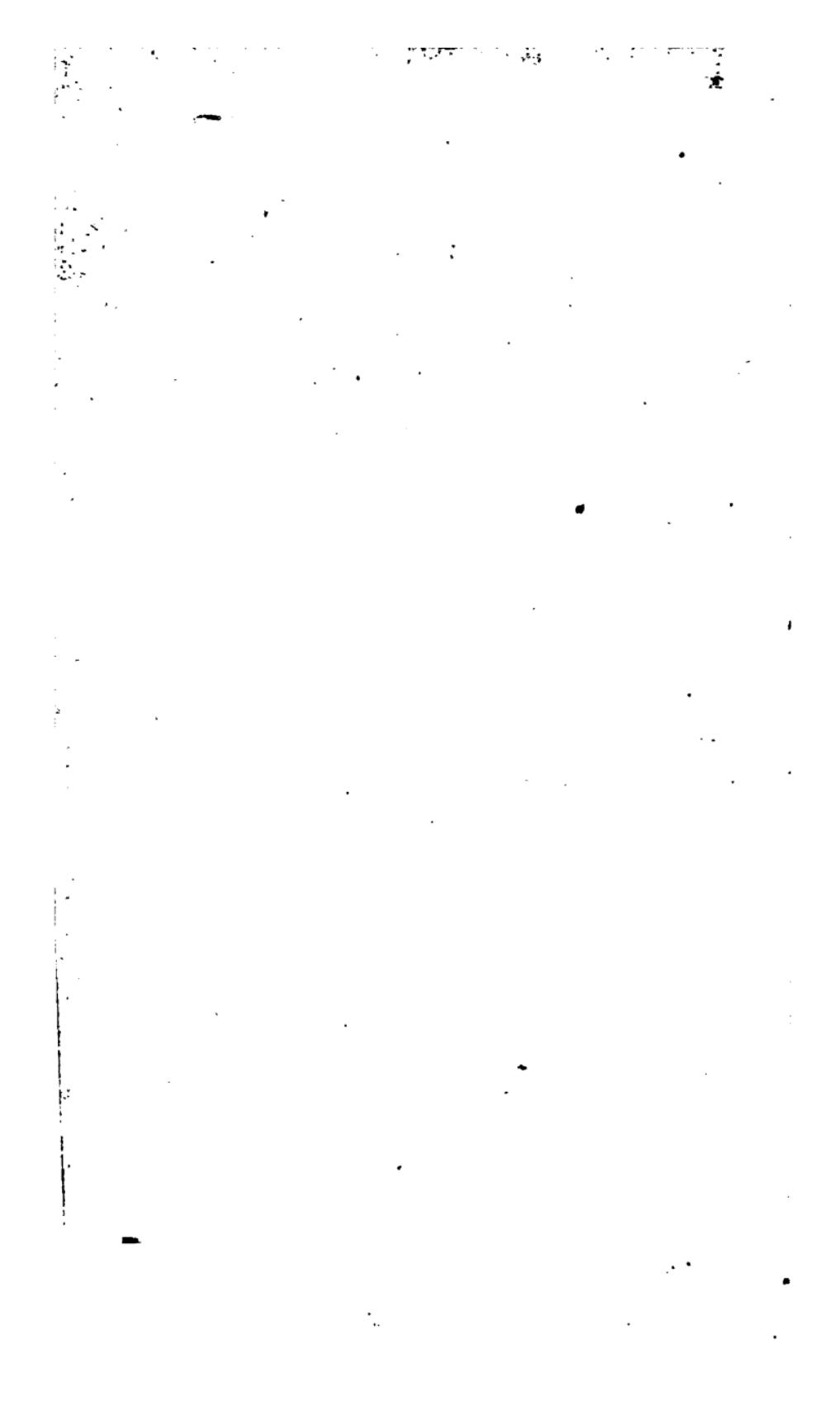
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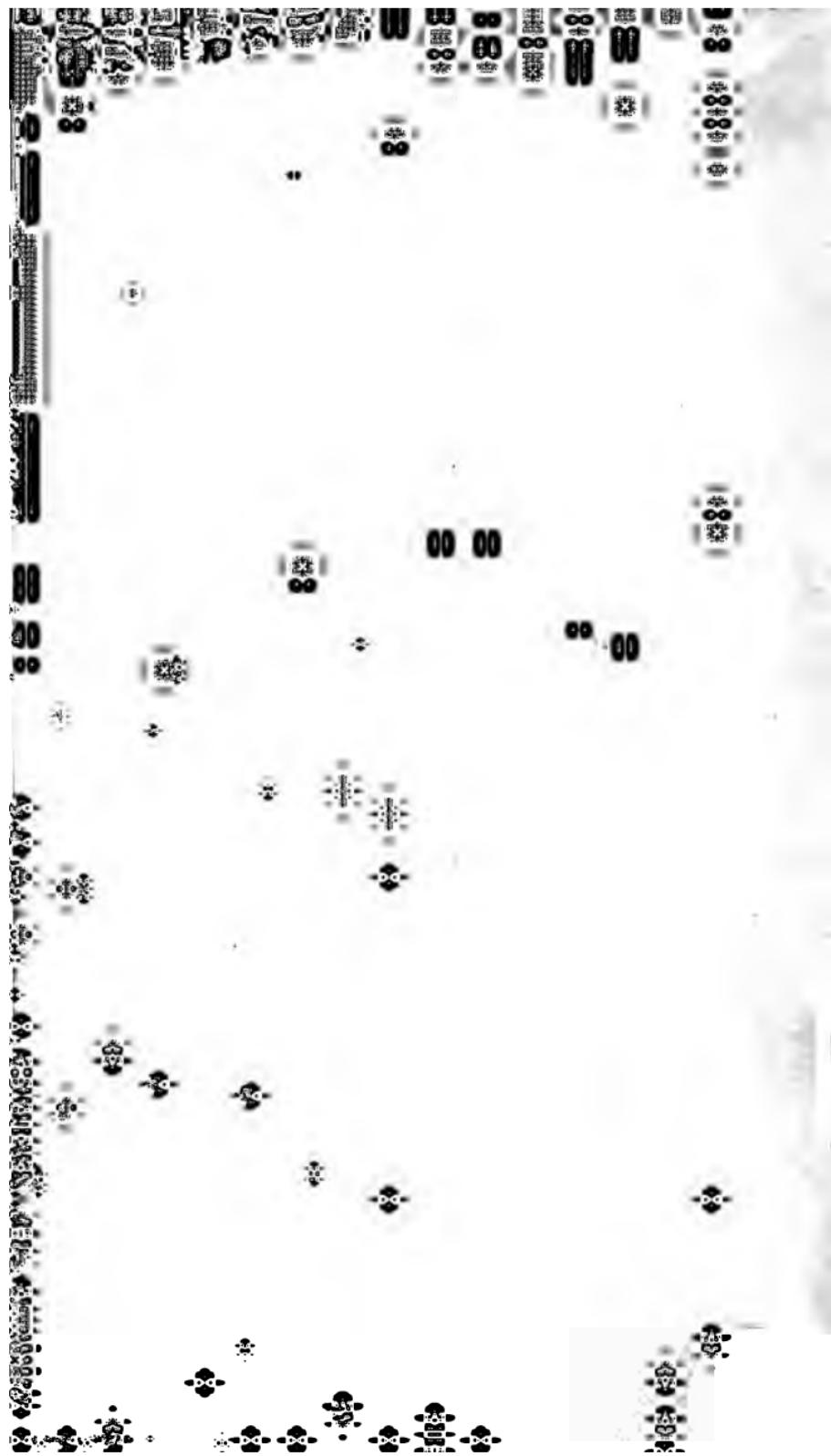
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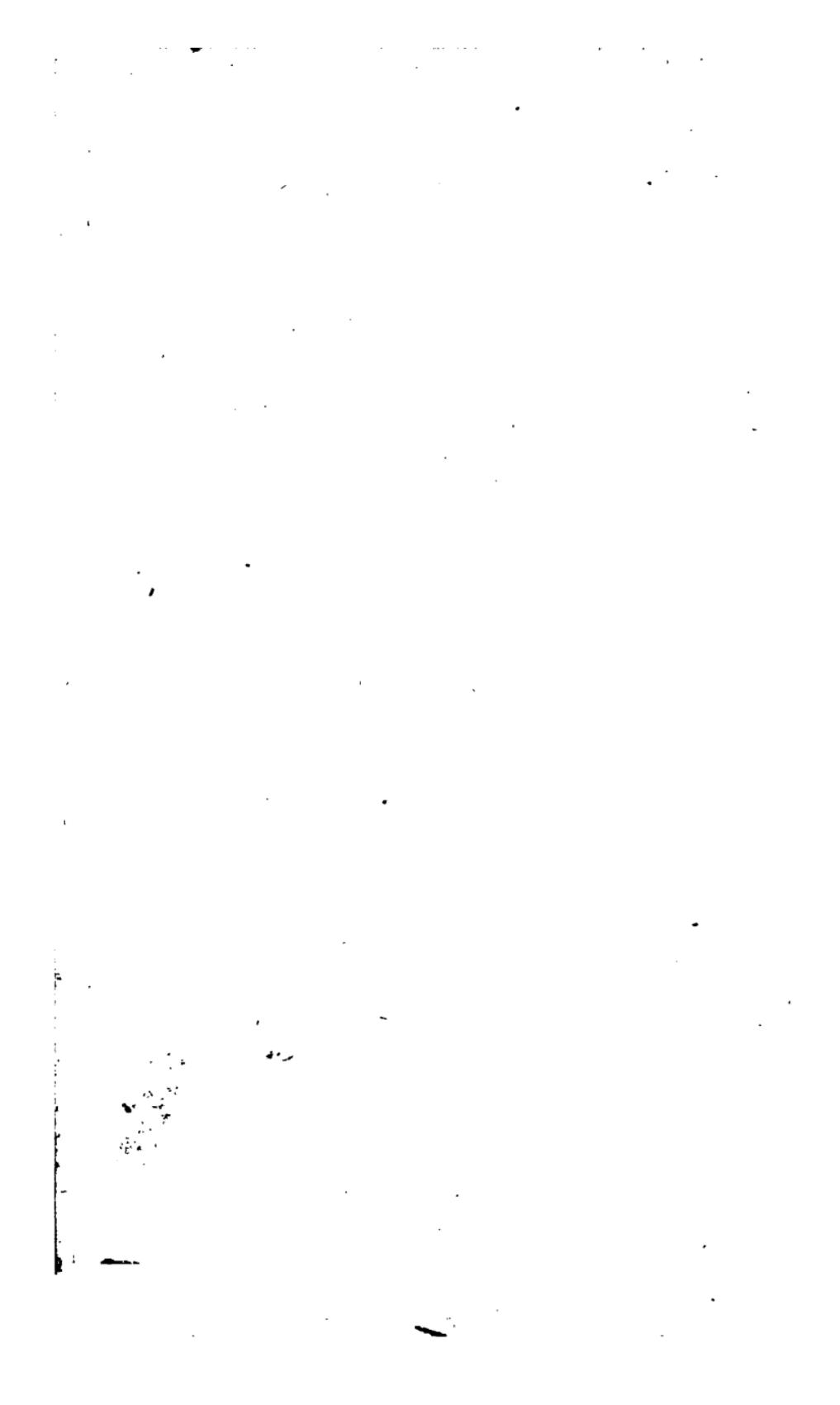
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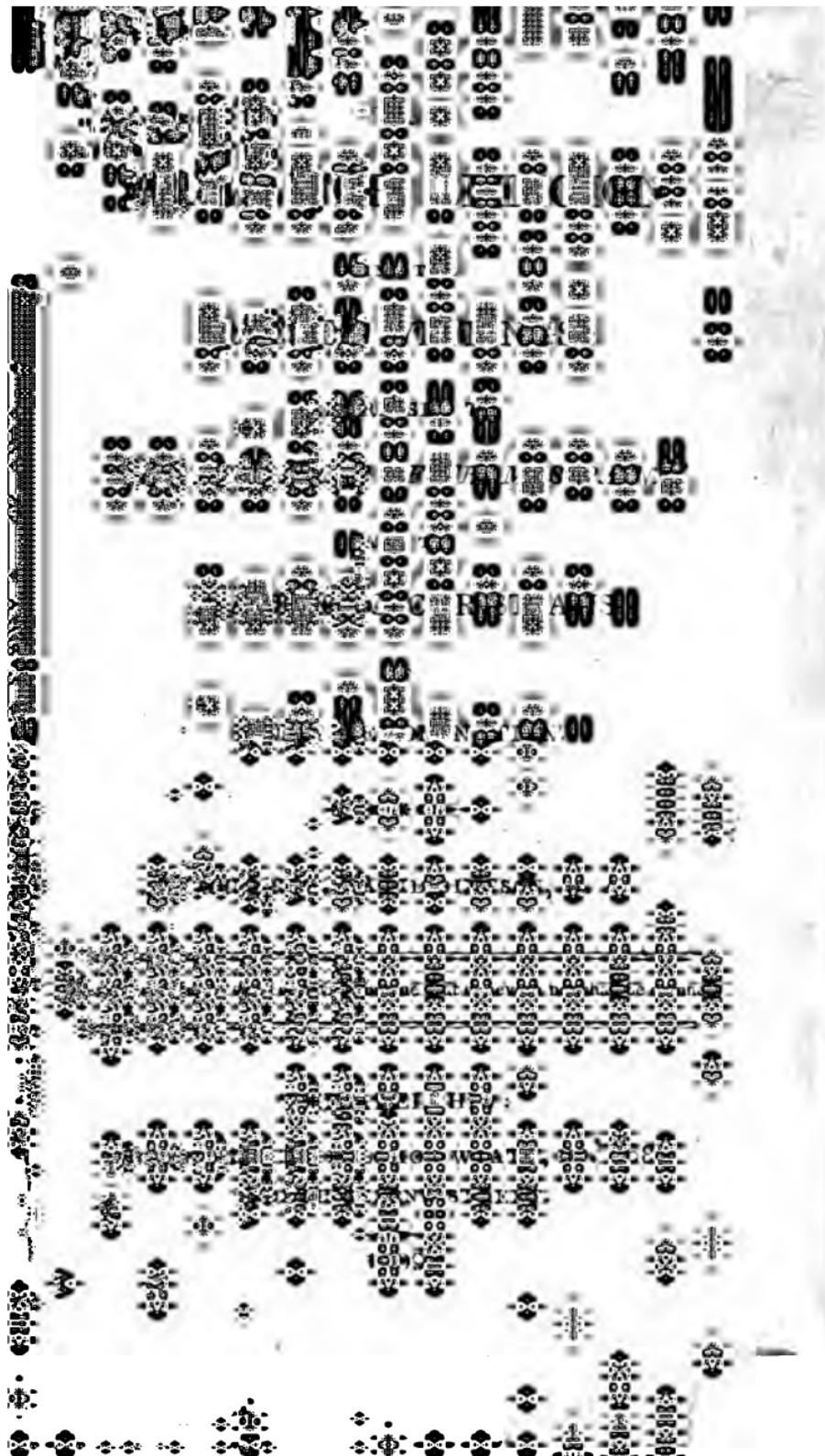
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## PREFACE.

IT has been said by bishop Horne, that, "in times when erroneous tenets are diffused, all men should embrace some opportunity to bear their testimony against them." If erroneous tenets were ever diffused among men in any age, they are eminently so in the present. I am so far, however, from considering this in the light of a misfortune to the general cause of truth, that I am persuaded, purposes of the most important nature are to be answered by it. But, notwithstanding this persuasion, I have thought it my duty, to bear a decided testimony against some of the most pernicious of those errors which prevail among us, and to stand forward as an advocate in behalf of religion in general, and the Sacred Writings in particular. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

One might suppose, infidelity was a thing of so gloomy and uncomfortable a nature, that no man of the least decency of character could be found, who would embark in the desperate scheme. But, when we consider the many awful threatenings recorded in the Bible against persons of a certain description; the numerous passages apparently liable to very serious objections, the natural darkness of the human understanding, the perverseness of the human will, and the imperious calls of contending passions, we need not be surprised, that a large proportion of irreligious characters, who have little to hope from divine mercy, and much to fear from divine justice, should be induced to embark in any scheme, which is calculated to afford them present indulgence, and to free them from apprehensions of future danger. Thomas Paine's principles may buoy up the minds of persons of this

character, while health and prosperity smile upon them, but they will fail them in seasons of adversity, and especially in the views of approaching dissolution.(1) Give me a religion that will stand by me at all seasons, in prosperity and adversity, in sickness and health, in time and eternity. I would not give a rush for a religion, which will only serve my turn when the sunshine of worldly favour illuminates my steps, and fail me when I stand in the greatest need of its supports. This is the case with Deism, as many have found to their extreme sorrow, when the eternal world drew near, and dawned upon their astonished sight. And multitudes of our fellow creatures set free from the salutary restraints of religion, and the government of the Divine Being, by a daring and uncontroled spirit of infidelity, destroy themselves, and rush into the presence of the Almighty without dismay.(2)

More reasonable and becoming is the conduct of those, who brought to a sense of their sin and folly, fear and tremble before this dread Sovereign. This was the case of the late Lord P——, who after he became a Deist, took every opportunity to shew his contempt of religion. The clergyman and parishioners of the place, where his lordship's seat in Northamptonshire stood, usually passed in sight of the house in

(1) "You have been used" said Mr. Henry to a friend, a little before his death, "to take notice of the sayings of dying men. This is mine. That a life spent in the service of God and communion with him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life that one can live in this world."

(2) The general practice of duelling, is a sure indication, that a spirit of infidelity is alarmingly gone abroad. A christian fight a duel? Impossible! True valour forbids it. And, upon the Lord's day too! Still more impossible! Every principle of his religion prohibits the impious deed; good morals, sound policy, true patriotism, all forbid the unchristian rencontrore. Were we to act thus in common life, a state of confinement would be thought essentially necessary for our welfare, and the public good.—Can nothing be done, can no measures be taken, to stop this infamous practice, this national opprobrium?

their way to church. At the time of going and returning, he frequently ordered his children and servants into the hall, for the vile purpose of laughing at, and ridiculing them. He pursued this course for some time, but at length drew near the close of his life. Upon his dying pillow his views were altered. He found, that however his former sentiments might suit him in health, they could not support him in the hour of dissolution. When in the cold arms of death, the terrors of the Almighty were heavy upon him. Painful remembrance brought to view ten thousand insults offered to that God, at whose bar he was shortly to stand ; and conscience being strongly impressed with the solemnity of that day, he justly feared, that the God whom he had insulted would then consign him to destruction. With his mind thus agitated, he called to a person in the room, and desired him, " to go into the library, and fetch the cursed book," meaning that which had made him a Deist. He went ; but returned, saying he could not find it. The nobleman then cried with vehemence, that "he must go again, and look till he did find it, for he could not die till it was destroyed." The person, having at last met with it, gave it into his hands. It was no sooner committed to him, than he tore it in pieces, with mingled horror and revenge, and committed it to the flames. Having thus taken vengeance on the instrument of his own ruin, he soon after breathed his soul into the hands of his Creator.

At Bolton there is a considerable number of deistical persons, who assemble together on sundays to confirm each other in their infidelity. The oaths and imprecations which are uttered in that meeting are too horrible to relate, while they toss the word of God upon the floor, kick it round the house, and tread it under their feet. William Pope, who had been a steady Methodist for some years, became at length a professed Deist, and joined himself to this crew. After he had been an associate of this company some

time, he was taken ill, and the nature of his complaint was such, that he confessed the hand of God was upon him, and he declared he longed to die, that he might go to hell ; many times praying earnestly for damnation. Messrs. Rhodes and Barrowclough, were sent for to talk and pray with the unhappy man. But he was so far from being thankful for their advice and assistance, that he spit in their faces, threw at them whatever he could lay his hands upon, struck one of them upon the head with all his might, and often cried out, when they were praying, *Lord do not hear their prayers !* If they said, *Lord save his soul !* He cried *Lord, damn my soul !* often adding, *My damnation is sealed and I long to be in hell !* In this way he continued, until he died. He was frequently visited by his deistical brethren during his illness, who would have persuaded the public that he was not in his senses ; Mr. Rhodes said, *He was as full of the devil as he could hold.*

These are shocking instances of the dreadful effects of infidelity upon the minds of our fellow creatures, in those seasons when we most stand in need of support and consolation. If living witnesses to the truth and importance of religion and the Sacred Writings (3)

(3) It becomes every objector to the Sacred Writings to reflect, that "the moral and natural evils in the world, were not introduced by the gospel ; why then must the gospel be called upon to account for them, rather than any other religion, or sect of philosophy ? If there never had been an Old Testament, never a New one, mankind would have been at least as corrupt and miserable as they are at present. What harm then have the Old and New Testament done to you, that you perpetually challenge them to account to you for the evil you suffer ? You dislike perhaps the story of Adam and Eve, and can by no means digest the account of the serpent's tempting, and prevailing against our first parents : very well ; let this account be laid aside, and what are you now the better ? Is there not the same evil remaining in the world, whether you believe, or believe not the story of the fall ? And if so, what account do you pretend to give of it ? For if you pretend to any religion, you are as liable to be called to this account, as any professor or teacher of the gospel. Nobody is exempt in this case, but the Atheist ; and he has no account to give of any thing ; for all difficulties are alike upon his scheme."

might have any consideration with such of my readers, as are theistically inclined, I could produce many of the first characters of the age, from among all the contending denominations of christians. Jacob Bryant, who is one of the deepest inquirers into the originals of things now living, hath not only written a treatise professedly to prove the authenticity of the New Testament, but has also, in another of his investigations, made the following declaration:

“ This investigation,” a work which was written to prove that Troy never existed, “ I more readily undertook, as it affords an excellent contrast with the Sacred Writings. The more we search into the very ancient records of Rome or of Greece, the greater darkness and uncertainty ensue. None of them can stand the test of close examination. Upon a minute inspection, all becomes dark and doubtful, and often inconsistent: but when we encounter the sacred volume, even in parts of far higher antiquity, the deeper we go, the greater treasure we find. The various parts are so consistent, that they afford mutual illustration; and the more earnestly we look, the greater light accrues, and consequently the greater satisfaction. So it has always appeared to me, who have looked diligently, and examined; and I trust have not been mistaken.”(4)

(4) “When I was in camp with the duke of Marlborough,” says he, “an officer of my acquaintance desired me upon my making a short excursion, to take him with me in my carriage. Our conversation was rather desultory, as is usual upon such occasions: and among other things he asked me, rather abruptly, what were my notions about religion. I answered evasively, or at least indeterminately, as his inquiry seemed to proceed merely from an idle curiosity: and I did not see that any happy consequence could ensue from an explanation. However, some time afterwards he made a visit at my house, and stayed with me a few days. During this interval, one evening he put the question to me again; and at the same time added, that he should be really obliged, if I would give him my thoughts in general upon the subject. Upon this I turned towards him, and after a short pause told him, that my opinion lay in a small compass: and he should have it in as compendious a manner, as the subject

Various similar testimonies are adduced in the following work. Mr. Erskine has lately come forward in a manner more direct and full in behalf of religion and the Sacred Writings, in a speech, which he delivered upon the trial of Williams, for publishing Paine's *Age of Reason*.

" The defendant stands indicted for having published this book, which I have read from the obligations of professional duty only, and from the reading of which I rose with astonishment and disgust.—For my own part, I have been ever deeply devoted to the truths of Christianity, and my firm belief in the Holy Gospel is by no means owing to the prejudices of education, but it arises from the fullest reflection of my riper years and understanding. It forms, at this moment, the great consolation of a life, which, as a shadow, must pass away; and without it, I should consider my long course of health and prosperity, perhaps too long and too uninterrupted to be good for any man, as the dust only which the wind scatters, and rather as a snare than as a blessing.

" This publication appears to me to be as mischievous and cruel in its probable effects, as it is manifestly illegal in its principles; because it strikes at the best, sometimes, alas! the only refuge and consolation amidst the distresses and afflictions of the world. The

would permit. Religion, I said, is either true, or false. This is the alternative: there is no medium. If it be the latter—merely an idle system, and a cunningly-devised fable, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. The world is before us, let us take all due advantage, and choose what may seem best. For we have no prospect of any life to come; much less any assurances. But if religion be a truth, it is the most serious truth of any with which we can possibly be engaged: an article of the greatest importance. It demands our most diligent inquiry to obtain a knowledge of it: and a fixed resolution to abide by it, when obtained. For religion teaches us, that this life bears no proportion to the life to come. You see then, that an alternative of the utmost consequence lies before you. Make therefore your election, as you may judge best; and Heaven direct you in your determination.—He told me that he was much affected with the crisis, to which I brought the object of inquiry: and I trust, that it was attended with happy consequences afterwards."

poor and humble, whom it affects to pity, may be stabbed to the heart by it. They have more occasion for firm hopes beyond the grave, than those who have greater comforts to render life delightful. I can conceive a distressed but virtuous man, surrounded by children looking up to him for bread when he has none to give them, sinking under the last day's labour, and unequal to the next, yet still anticipating with confidence the hour when all tears shall be wiped from the eyes of affliction, bearing the burden laid upon him by a mysterious Providence which he adores, and looking forward with exultation to the revealed promises of his Creator, when he shall be greater than the greatest, and happier than the happiest of mankind. What a change in such a mind might not be wrought by such a merciless publication?

“ But it seems, this is an Age of Reason, and the time and the persons are at last arrived, that are to dissipate the errors which have overspread the past generations of ignorance. The believers in Christianity are many, but it belongs to the few that are wise to correct their credulity. Belief is an act of reason, and superior reason may, therefore, dictate to the weak.

“ In running the mind over the long list of sincere and devout Christians, I cannot help lamenting, that Newton had not lived to this day, to have had his shallowness filled up with this new flood of light.

“ But the subject is too awful for irony. I will speak plainly and directly. Newton was a Christian! Newton, whose mind burst forth from the fetters, cast by nature upon our finite conceptions—Newton, whose science was truth, and the foundation of whose knowledge of it was philosophy: not those visionary and arrogant presumptions, which too often usurp its name, but philosophy resting upon the basis of mathematics, which, like figures, cannot lie—Newton, who carried the line and rule to the utmost barriers of creation, and explored the principles by which all created matter is held together and exists.

“ But this extraordinary man, in the mighty reach of his mind, overlooked, perhaps, the errors, which a minute investigation of the created things on this earth might have taught him, of the essence of his Creator.

“ What shall then be said of Boyle, who looked into the organic structure of all matter, even to the brute inanimate substances, on which the foot treads?— Such a man may be supposed to have been equally qualified with Mr. Paine to look up through Nature to Nature’s God. Yet the result of all his contemplation was the most confirmed and devout belief in all that which the other holds in contempt, as despicable and drivelling superstition.

“ But this error might, perhaps, arise from a want of due attention to the foundations of human judgment, and the structure of that understanding which God has given us for the investigation of truth.

“ Let that question be answered by Locke, who was, to the highest pitch of devotion and adoration, a Christian: Locke, whose office was to detect the errors of thinking, by going up to the fountains of thought, and to direct into the proper tract of reasoning, the devious mind of man, by shewing its whole process, from the first perceptions of sense to the last conclusions of ratiocination, putting a rein upon false opinion, by practical rules for the conduct of human judgment.

“ But these men were deep thinkers only, and lived in their closets, unaccustomed to the traffic of the world, and to the laws which practically regulate mankind.

“ In the place where we now sit to administer justice, above a century ago, Hale presided; whose faith in Christianity is an exalted commentary on its truth and reason, and whose life was a glorious example of its fruits in man, administering human justice with a wisdom and purity drawn from the pure fountain of the Christian dispensation, which has been, and will

be, in all ages, a subject of the highest reverence and admiration.

“ But it is said by the author, that the Christian fable is but the tale of the more ancient superstitions of the world, and may be easily detected by a proper understanding of the mythologies of the Heathens.

“ Did Milton understand those mythologies? Was he less versed than Mr. Paine in the superstitions of the world? No; they were the subject of his immortal song; and though shut out from all recurrence to them, he poured them forth from the stores of a memory rich with all that man ever knew, and laid them in their order as the illustration of that real and exalted faith, the unquestionable source of that fervid genius, which cast a sort of shade upon all the other works of man:

“ He passed the bounds of flaming space,  
Where angels tremble while they gaze;  
He saw, till blasted with excess of light,  
He closed his eyes in endless night.”

But it was the light of the body only that was extinguished; the celestial light shone inward, and enabled him to “justify the ways of God to man.” The result of his thinking was nevertheless not the same as the author’s. The mysterious incarnation of our Blessed Saviour, which this work blasphemes in words wholly unfit for the mouth of a Christian, or for the ear of a court of justice, Milton made the grand conclusion of the *Paradise Lost*, the rest from his finished labours, and the ultimate hope, expectation, and glory of the world:—

“ A virgin is his Mother, but his Sire,  
The power of the Most High; he shall ascend  
The Throne hereditary, and bound his reign  
With earth’s wide bounds, his glory with the Heav’ns.”

“ Piety has found  
Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer  
Has flow’d from lips wet with Castalian dews.  
Such was thy wisdom, Newton, childlike sage!  
Sagacious reader of the works of God,  
And in his word sagacious. Such too thine,

Milton whose genius had angelic wings,  
And fed on manna. And such thine, in whom  
Our British Themis glорied with just cause,  
Immortal Hale ! for deep discernment prais'd,  
And sound integrity, not more than fam'd  
For sanctity of manners undefil'd."(5)

He that feels not conviction from these reasonings is out of the reach of all ordinary means of conviction, and must be dealt with in some more fearful manner. I pray God that his conscience may be alarmed as with thunder—that the arrows of the Almighty may stick fast within him—that his soul may feel the terrors of hell following hard after him—that, he may be made a monument of divine justice in the sight of all men—and that, he may be finally snatched as a brand from the burning by the power of sovereign grace ! May that blood, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, and on which he now profanely and insolently tramples, be applied to his soul by the energy of the eternal spirit ; and may there be joy in the presence of the angels of God at his conversion, and heaven's eternal arches resound with hallelujahs at the news of a sinner saved !

In this volume Mr. Paine's objections to the Bible are particularly considered, and answers returned.

A compendious account of church-preferments is introduced, with a general view of the Dissenting congregations.

The present state of the Methodist societies is noticed, with some account of that body of Christians.

The missions to the Heathen are spoken of with approbation. These noble efforts for the salvation of mankind, are one reason why, in the midst of abounding iniquity, our fate, as a nation, is, for a season, suspended.(6)

(5) I am not clear that this prosecution can be justified upon the principles of Christian liberty.

(6) Is it not an instance of the most unamiable bigotry, that when such generous, disinterested, and noble efforts have been mak-

Both believers and unbelievers, will meet with something or another that will be useful to them. Whatever is pernicious, they will reject, remembering that we are enjoined to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.

Some shameful instances of non-residence, patronage, and pluralities of livings, among the bishops and clergy of the land, are detailed.

The articles and canons, the liturgy, and the other public offices of our church, are reviewed and reprobated.

If he be thought severe upon the episcopal and clerical orders of men, let it be remarked, that he esteems them all very highly in love for their offices' sake; and that, if at any time he has given way to his indignation, and expressed himself in strong terms against these orders, it is never intended to affect any but the culpable part of them.

“But, in a plea for religion and the Sacred Writings, where is the propriety of exposing the imperfections of the church, with her bishops and clergy?”

Because the undiscerning world and our deistical fellow creatures, constantly unite them together, and

ing for the civilization and christanization of the South Sea islands, scarcely one bishop or dignified clergyman of the church of England; scarcely one Arian or Socinian congregation, those more opulent bodies of dissenters; scarcely one nobleman, and but very few rich commoners have contributed a single shilling out of their ample revenues towards promoting this expensive and god-like design?—The honour and blessedness of the glorious attempt is left to the poor!—Is not such a conduct among our great ones speaking in the strongest of all language, that it is better the poor, miserable, benighted Heathen nations should continue in their present deplorable condition, than that they should be brought out of darkness into the glorious liberty of the children of God, in any other way than that prescribed by them? Oh! shame to these several orders of men. What a curse has not bigotry ever been to mankind?—*Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followed not us,* said the selfish and party-spirited apostles. *Forbid him not,* replied the benevolent and liberal-minded Saviour, *for there is no man that can work a miracle in my name, who will lightly speak evil of me.*—I add, with the apostle, If Christ be preached, and souls saved, I herein do rejoice, and will rejoice, whoever is the instrument.

wound the pure and immortal religion of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Scriptures, through them. What has the character and gospel of Christ to do with the treachery of Judas, the cowardice of Peter, the ambition of James and John, the lukewarmness and worldly spirit of our bishops and clergy, or with the superstitious and secular appendages of the church of Rome, the church of England, or any other human establishment under heaven? They are things perfectly distinct. And if we mean to defend the Gospel to any purpose, it must be the Gospel alone, independent of every human mixture and addition. Corrupt churches and bad men cannot be defended.

The best part of the book, is the discussion upon the excellence and utility of the Sacred Writings. He is anxious to recommend them *to the daily* perusal of every man; because both our present peace and future welfare depend upon the practice: and if all the rest of the book be rejected with contempt, this should be attended to with peculiar seriousness.

The reduction of the national religion to the pure standard of the Gospel, and the moral and religious reformation of all orders of men, are repeatedly insisted on, and with singular earnestness; as what alone, can save us from impending ruin. There can be no general spread of evangelical principles and practices, while the hierarchy is in its present contaminated state, and the bishops and clergy continue in a condition so generally depraved.

If any of his clerical brethren be offended at the freedoms he has taken with his own order, or the established religion of his country; so far as the moral and religious conduct of the clergy is concerned, the best mode will be, to correct and amend what is amiss. So far as the durability of the ecclesiastical constitution of the country is in question, he would refer to the prophetic declarations of the St. John of the Old Testament.

Two Appendices are subjoined, the former of which contains some thoughts on reform, and the latter, his reasons for resigning his preferment in the religious establishment of the country, and declining any longer to officiate as a minister in the church of England.

The author is extremely alarmed for the safety of his friends in this day of abounding infidelity, when he considers the declaration of Christ, that, Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

It is impossible to add any thing to the weight of these words. The heart that is unappalled by them is harder than the nether mill-stone, and incapable of religious melioration.

When you have perused this volume, if you think it calculated, in ever so small a degree, to impress the mind with conviction, lend it to your unbelieving neighbour, remembering the words of James: Brethren! if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the evil of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

If the author has advanced any thing that is wrong, uncharitable, unchristian, or unbecoming his station, in the course of these strictures, he is heartily sorry for it. Let him not, however, accept any man's person, neither let him give flattering titles unto man; for he knows not to give flattering titles; in so doing his Maker would soon take him away. It has been his desire to speak the plain honest truth, without courting any man's favour, or fearing any man's displeasure.(7) He makes no question but a large

(7) George II. who was fond of Whiston, happened to be walking with him one day, during the heat of his persecution, in Hampton Court garden. As they were talking upon this subject, his majesty observed, that "however right he might be in his opinions, it

number of good men are to be found both in the church established and out of it. Even the most despised sectarists, are not wholly destitute.(8) And, one such character is infinitely more estimable, than a million of immoral parsons, those most miserable and contemptible of all human beings, who contaminate every neighbourhood where they dwell ; or ever so large a body of mere literary clergymen, however extolled and caressed by the world, who, bloated

would be better to keep them to himself."—"Is your majesty really serious in your advice ?" answered the old man, "I really am," replied the king.—"Why then," said Whiston, "had Martin Luther been of this way of thinking, where would your majesty have been at this time."

"But why speak so freely and openly upon all these public abuses at a time so critical as the present?"

Because I may never have another opportunity, and it is proper that somebody should speak. For the public abuses specified, must either be removed by the gentle hand of reform, or Divine Providence will take the matter himself and subvert them by a rough hand.

(8) The wise ones of the world would do well to call to mind, who it is that hath said, That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. Luke xvi. 15. Compare 1 Cor. i. 26—29. Men, sects, and parties, who are held in the highest estimation by the world, are held in the lowest estimation by God; and, those, who are held in the lowest estimation by the world, are held in the highest estimation by the Almighty.

The way to heaven prescribed by the Scripture, and the way to heaven prescribed by worldly-minded men, are as opposite to each other as the east to the west. The former saith, Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. The latter say, Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth unto life, and many there be which go in thereat. Persons of this character are usually secure and confident, determined and resolute, merry and jovial, and perceive little or no danger even when they are dancing blindfold on the brink of destruction. A man who turned all serious godliness into ridicule and contempt, declared there was no need of so much ado, for if he had but time to say three words, "Lord save me," he did not doubt but he should go to heaven. Not long after, this confident Gallio was riding a spirited horse over a bridge, upon which he met a flock of sheep; the horse took fright, leaped over the battlement into the river, where his rider was drowned, and the last three words he was heard to speak were, Devil—take—all. It is dangerous to provoke God!

with pride and self-importance, are a disgrace to the lowly spirit of the Saviour of mankind. To every truly pious and consistent Christian, literate or illiterate, he would give the right hand of fellowship, and bid him God-speed in the name of the Lord. Clerical bigots, of every description, he most cordially despises. They are despicable animals. Swoln with an imaginary dignity, they are *wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight*, lording it over the poor of Christ's flock, and *binding heavy burthens upon them and grievous to be borne, which they themselves will not move with one of their fingers*. Such characters, whether found among Episcopilians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Quakers, or any other men, are the Scribes and Pharisees of the day, to whom the great and inflexible Judge of the world, in just, but terrible language exclaimed, *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* The praise or dispraise of such men is equally indifferent. But a liberal-minded and benevolent soul, who embraces every human being in the arms of his charity, who rises superior to the superstitious tribe of infallible doctors—who can pierce through the guise of human distinctions, and trace religious excellence among all orders and descriptions of men, he would clasp to his bosom, make him room in his heart, and give him a place in his affections. He loves a generous soul, a noble spirit, with whom he can hold sweet converse(9) on

(9) The third chapter of Malachi contains the most emphatical recommendation of religious conversation that ever was penned. Even Cicero speaks with indignation of men of talents meeting together, and spending all their time in milking the ram, or holding the pail.

This brings to recollection an anecdote concerning Locke, who being invited by a nobleman to meet some of the most celebrated wits and scholars of the age, went in great expectation of enjoying a high intellectual repast. The card table being introduced after dinner, contrary to his expectation, he retired pensive and chagrined to the window. Inquiry being made if he was well, he replied,

things human and divine ; trace the awful footsteps of a mysterious Providence,

“ And justify the ways of God to man ;”

while angels ministrant attend the enraptured strains.

From a melancholy dearth of such a society, he is generally constrained to converse with the ancient and modern dead, those first of human beings, who have left us the image of their souls reflected in their immortal volumes. Here, he sometimes seems to catch a ray of their genius ; to intermingle soul with soul ; to taste the raptures of their sacred rage ; and to meditate unutterable things. Oh ! for a Spirit of burning, to refine these drossy natures ; “ a muse of fire,” to elevate the mind to their celestial strains ; and a seraph’s wings to mount up to the blissful throng of the spirits of just men made perfect, around the throne of the great Father of the universe, and his Son, the Ever-blest !—Yet a little while, and these shadows shall flee away—these earthly tabernacles be taken down—these mortal bodies be clothed with immortality—the church militant be changed into the church triumphant—and the infinite Majesty of Heaven be seen without a rival, and enjoyed without satiety through the long round of vast eternity !

DAVID SIMPSON.

“ He had come in full confidence of receiving an uncommon degree of satisfaction in the conversation of such celebrated characters, and he must acknowledge he felt himself hurt at the disappointment.” The card table was immediately withdrawn, and a rich flow of souls begun, to his no small satisfaction.

# A PLEA FOR RELIGION

AND THE

## SACRED WRITINGS.



THERE are few ages of the world, which have not produced various instances of persons, who have treated the Divine dispensations, either with neglect or scorn. Of these, some have persisted in their folly to the latest period of their earthly existence ; while others have discovered their mistake in time, and both sought and found forgiveness with God.—In most ages there have been some, who have piously observed the manifestations of Heaven ; who have cordially received the Holy Scriptures as a revelation from on high ; and who have built their everlasting expectations upon the salvation which is therein revealed. The hopes of such persons have never been disappointed. If they have lived up, in any good degree, to their religious profession, they have been favoured with peace of mind, and strong consolation in life ; firm confidence in Christ, at the hour of death ; and have frequently gone off the stage of time into eternity, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, with unspeakable and triumphant joy.—But how extremely different, is the last end of those persons, who have denied and scorned the revelations of Heaven ; who have rejected the Sacred Writings ; and treated serious godliness with sneer and contempt ?—Nay, it has frequently been known, that the first-rate geniuses, and greatest men of their times, have left the world under much darkness of mind, full of doubts, and fearful apprehensions concerning the Divine favour, owing to their being too deeply immersed in secular, or lite-

rary pursuits ; to their living beneath their Christian privileges ; and spending too small a portion of their time in devout retirement, and religious exercises. Nothing, indeed, can keep the life of God vigorously alive in the soul, but these exercises. Where they are either wholly neglected, or frequently interrupted, there the power of religion languishes. Faith and hope, peace and love, joy in, and confidence towards God, grow weak ; doubts and fears, disquietude of mind, and scruples of conscience prevail. The sun goes down, and sets, to this world at least, under a dark and cheerless cloud.—But where the humble believer in Christ Jesus lays aside every spiritual incumbrance, and the sin which hath been accustomed too easily to overcome him ; where he resolutely breaks through every snare, and lives to the great purposes for which we all were born ; where, with Boerhaave, and Sir John Barnard, the duke of Ormonde, and lord Capel,(1) he spends a due propor-

(1) It was the custom of three of these great men, to spend an hour every morning, in private prayer, and reading the holy Scriptures ; and of the fourth to meditate half an hour every day upon eternity. This gave them comfort and vigour of mind to support the toil and fatigue of the day. We are told in the life of Ormonde, that "he never prepared for bed, or went abroad in the morning till he had withdrawn an hour to his closet."

Lord Harrington, who died, A. D. 1613, at the age of 22 years, was a young nobleman of eminent piety, and rare literary attainments. He was an early riser, and usually spent a considerable part of the morning in private prayer, and reading the Sacred Writings. The same religious exercise was also pursued both in the evening and at mid-day.

Sir Harbottle Grimstone, "was a very pious and devout man, and spent every day at least an hour in the morning, and as much at night, in prayer and meditation. And even in winter, when he was obliged to be very early on the bench, he took care to rise so soon, that he had always the command of that time, which he gave to those exercises."

Colonel Gardener, used constantly to rise at four in the morning and to spend "his time till six, in the secret exercises of devotion, reading, meditation, and prayer. And if at any time he was obliged to go out before six in the morning, he rose proportionably sooner ; so that when a journey or march required him to be on horseback by four, he would be at his devotion at farthest by two."

tion of every day in private prayer, meditation, and reading the sacred volume ; with these truly valuable men he usually hath large enjoyment of the consolations of religion, and abounds in peace and hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. He goes through life, if not smoothly and usefully, at least contentedly and happily. While, in the eyes of those persons, who boast of their superiority of understanding, and freedom from vulgar prejudices, the Redeemer of the world becomes daily more and more contemptible ; and in the eyes of the lukewarm Christian less and less desirable ; in the estimation of the devout and lively believer, who, by waiting upon the Lord, renews his strength, the Son of God, in his person, offices, and work, appears, with increasing affection, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Being convinced of sin, and justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him. He is strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, and Christ dwells in his heart by faith. Being rooted and grounded in love, he comprehends with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and he knows the love of Christ, though indeed it passeth knowledge. He is, filled with all the communicable fulness of God, and a peace passing understanding keepeth his heart and mind, through Christ Jesus.

"A Christian dwells, like Uriel, in the sun :  
Meridian evidence puts doubt to flight ;  
And ardent hope anticipates the skies."

The language of his soul, is, Whom have I in heaven but thee, O God ? and there is none upon earth

General Waller, was as devout in the closet, as he was valiant in the field.

These religious persons were men of great consideration in the world, who were engaged in extremely active scenes of life.

that I desire in comparison of thee. To do unto others as he would have them do unto him, is the great law of his life, in all his dealings between man and man ; and whereinsoever he falls short of a full compliance with this royal statute, he laments and bewails his folly ; makes satisfaction according to the nature of the case ; flees to the blood of sprinkling for pardon ; and returns with renewed vigour to the path of duty. Giving all diligence, he adds to his faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity. With zealous affection he cultivates the holy tempers that were in Christ ; bowels of mercy, lowliness, meekness, gentleness, contempt of the world, patience, temperance, long suffering, a tender love to every human being, bearing, believing, hoping, enduring all things. He loves with peculiar affection the whole brotherhood of believers in Christ Jesus. He endeavours to acquit himself with propriety in every station, whether as master, servant, parent, child, magistrate, subject, teacher, learner. In short ; whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, to these he attends with the utmost diligence and assiduity. This is the christianity, which the Son of God taught unto the world.(2) And he

(2) Robertson, the historian, tells us, that "Christianity is rational and sublime in its doctrines, humane and beneficent in its precepts, pure and simple in its worship." And even Paine acknowledges that "Jesus Christ was a virtuous and amiable man ; that the morality which he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind ; that though similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers many years before, and by many good men in all ages ; it has not been exceeded by any." Where is the propriety then of endeavouring to explode the gospels !

Bolingbroke has made similar confessions :—" No religion, ever appeared in the world whose natural tendency was so much directed

that is of this religion is my brother, my sister, and my mother.

But this is not the religion of the great body of persons calling themselves Christians. Many of our brethren are extremely immoral. Others are guilty of some particular vice only. Some are decent in their general conduct, and attentive to religious observances, but total strangers to inward religion. Great advocates for their own party, they harbour a strong aversion to all who dare to think for themselves, and presume to dissent from them in principle or practice. So remote are they from the character and experience of the above evangelical requirements, that they consider them as delusive and enthusiastic. Something of the form of godliness they have gotten, but they deny, and sometimes even ridicule the power. Be this as it may, true religion is still the same ; and the above is a scriptural sketch of it, whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear. So far are we Christians from being ashamed of this gospel-method

to promote the peace and happiness of mankind as Christianity. No system can be more simple and plain than that of natural religion, as it stands in the gospel. The system of religion which Christ published, and his evangelists recorded, is a complete system to all the purposes of religion, natural and revealed. Christianity, as it stands in the gospel, contains not only a complete, but a very plain system of religion. The gospel is in all cases one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity."

These are strange concessions from professed Deists ? And yet much the same have been made by Blount, Tindal, Morgan, Toland, Chubb, Rousseau, and most of our other real or pretended unbelievers.

The truth is, all these deistical gentlemen could approve the morality, or some parts of the morality of the New Testament, but they could neither understand nor approve the grand scheme of redemption therein exhibited. Why? Because the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned: 1 Cor. ii. 14.—They were blind to all the glories of the gospel-scheme. They neither saw nor felt their need of the redemption which is therein exhibited. What wonder then if they spent their lives in opposing its gracious designs ?

of saving a lost world, that we make it our boast and song all the day through in the house of our pilgrimage.

“ I'll praise my Maker with my breath,  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler pow'rs ;  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
While life, or thought, or being last,  
Or immortality endures.”

We experience its effect in raising us from the ruins of our fall. We lament with sincere contrition the sins and follies of our unregenerate state. We discover nothing but condemnation, while we remain under the covenant of works. We flee for refuge to the only hope of sinful men ; and we consider ourselves as the happiest of God's creatures, in having this plank thrown out, on which we are permitted to escape safe to land. In the mean time we feel that this religion makes us easy, comfortable, happy ; and seems adapted with consummate wisdom, to our state and circumstances.

“ Soft peace she brings, wherever she arrives,  
She builds our quiet as she forms our lives ;  
Lays the rough paths of peevish nature ev'n,  
And opens in each breast a little heav'n.”

This is the portion of happiness, which the gospel yields us while we live, and we have not the smallest fear that it will fail us when we die : for we know, that our light affliction in this world, which is comparatively, but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; and that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.(3)

(3) “ If there be one condition in this life more happy than another, it is, surely, that of him, who finds all his hopes of futurity on the promises of the gospel; who carefully endeavours to conform his actions to its precepts ; looking upon the great God Almighty as his protector here, his rewarder hereafter, and his everlasting

" Nothing on earth we call our own,  
 But, strangers, to the world unknown,  
 We all their goods despise;  
 We trample on their whole delight,  
 And seek a country out of sight,  
 A country in the skies."

If then the religion of Jesus Christ be a delusion, it is a happy delusion, and even a wise man would scarcely wish to be undeceived. He would rather be ready to say with Cicero, when speaking of the immortality of the soul:—" If in this I err, I willingly err; nor, while I live, shall any man wrest from me this error, with which I am extremely delighted."(4)

It would not be difficult to produce striking instances of persons, as well from the Sacred Writings, as from the history of these latter ages, whose conduct and character have been conformable to the above representations. But as the Bible may be consulted at pleasure, we will cite a few instances of persons, who have been eminent during these latter ages only, and some of them, even in our own times. Dying infidels—penitent and recovered infidels—dying Christians, who have lived too much in the spirit of the world—and Christians dying, either with great composure of mind, or in the full assurance of faith.(5)

preserver. This is a frame of mind so perfective of our nature, that if christianity, from the belief of which it can only be derived, were as certainly false, as it is certainly true, one could not help wishing, that it might be universally received in the world."

Pope has a declaration worthy of memorial: " The boy despises the infant, the man the boy, the philosopher both, and the Christian all."

(4) Addison saith, of the immortality of the soul:—" If it be a dream, let me enjoy it; since it makes me both the happier and the better man."

(5) " There is nothing in history, which is so improving to the reader as those accounts which we meet with of the deaths of eminent persons, and of their behaviour at that dreadful season."

## EXAMPLES OF DYING INFIDELS.

"The wicked is driven away in his own wickedness."

"Horrible is the end of the unrighteous generation."

HOBBS was a celebrated infidel in the last age, who, in bravado, would sometimes speak very unbecoming things of God and his word. Yet, when alone, he was haunted with the most tormenting reflections, and would awake in great terror, if his candle happened but to go out in the night. He could never bear any discourse of death, and seemed to cast off all thoughts of it.(6) He lived to be upwards of ninety. His last sensible words were, when he found he could live no longer, "I shall be glad then to find a hole to creep out of the world at." And notwithstanding all his high pretensions to learning and philosophy, his uneasiness constrained him to confess, when he drew near to the grave, that "he was about to take a leap in the dark." The writings of this old sinner, ruined the earl of Rochester, and many other gentlemen. As that nobleman himself declared, after his conversion.

The account which the celebrated Sully gives us of young Servin is uncommon. "The beginning of June, 1623," says he, "I set out for Calais, where I was to embark, having with me a retinue of upwards of two hundred gentlemen, or who called themselves such, of whom a considerable number were

(6) What an amiable character was the heathen Socrates, when compared with this infidel philosopher! Just before the cup of poison was brought him, entertaining his friends with an amiable discourse on the immortality of the soul, he has these words: "Whether or no God will approve my actions, I know not; but this I am sure of, that I have at all times made it my endeavour to please him, and I have a good hope that this my endeavour will be accepted of him."

Who can doubt, but the merits of the all-atoning Lamb of God were extended to this virtuous heathen? How few professed Christians can honestly make the same appeal?—Besides, Socrates seems to have had as firm a faith in a Saviour then to come, as many of the most virtuous of the Israelitish nation.

really of the first distinction. Just before my departure old Servin came and presented his son to me, and begged I would use my endeavours to make him a man of some worth and honesty ; but he confessed he dared not hope, not through any want of understanding or capacity in the young man, but from his natural inclination to all kinds of vice. I found him to be at once both a wonder and a monster ; I can give no other idea of that assemblage of the most excellent and most pernicious qualities. Let the reader represent to himself a man of genius so lovely, and an understanding so extensive, as rendered him scarce ignorant of any thing that could be known ; of so vast and ready a comprehension, that he immediately made himself master of what he attempted ; and of so prodigious a memory, that he never forgot what he had once learned ; he possessed all parts of philosophy and the mathematics, particularly fortification and drawing : even in theology he was so well skilled, that he was an excellent preacher whenever he had a mind to exert that talent, and an able disputant for and against the reformed religion indifferently ; he not only understood Greek, Hebrew, and all the languages which we call learned, but also the different jargons or modern dialects ; he accented and pronounced them so naturally, and so perfectly imitated the gestures and manners both of the several nations of Europe, and the particular provinces of France, that he might have been taken for a native of all or of any of these countries ; and this quality he applied to counterfeit all sorts of persons, wherein he succeeded wonderfully ; he was, moreover, the best comedian and greatest droll that perhaps ever appeared ; he had a genius for poetry, and had written many verses ; he played upon almost all instruments, was a perfect master of music, and sung most agreeably and justly ; he was of a disposition to do, as well as to know, all things ; his body was perfectly well suited to his mind, he was light, nimble, dexterous, and fit for all exer-

cises ; he could ride well, and in dancing, wrestling, and leaping, he was admired : there are not any re-creative games that he did not know ; and he was skilled in almost all the mechanic arts. But now for the reverse of the medal : here it appeared that he was treacherous, cruel, cowardly, deceitful ; a liar, a cheat, a drunkard and glutton : a sharper in play, immersed in every species of vice, a blasphemer, an atheist ; in a word, in him might be found all the vices contrary to nature, honour, religion, and society ; the truth of which he himself evinced with his latest breath, for he died in the flower of his age, in a common brothel, perfectly corrupted by his debaucheries, and expired with a glass in his hand, cursing and denying God."

It is evident from this extraordinary case, that " with the talents of an angel a man may be a fool."—There is no necessary connection between great natural abilities and religious qualifications. They may go together, but they are frequently found asunder.

Francis Newport, who died in the year 1692, was favoured both with a liberal and religious education. After spending five years in the university, he was entered in one of the inns of the court. Here he fell into the hands of infidels, lost all his religious impressions, commenced infidel himself, and became a most abandoned character, uniting himself to a club of wretches who met together constantly to encourage each other in being critically wicked. In this manner he conducted himself for several years, till at length his intemperate courses brought on an illness, which revived all his former religious impressions, accompanied with an horror of mind inexpressible. The violence of his torments was such, that he sweat in the most prodigious manner. In nine days he was reduced from a robust state of health to perfect weakness, during all which time his language was the most dreadful that imagination can conceive. At one time, looking towards the fire, he said, " Oh ! that ~~was~~ was to lie and broil upon the fire for a hundred thousand

years, to purchase the favour of God, and to be reconciled to him again! But it is a fruitless vain wish; millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer the end of my tortures, than one poor hour. O eternity! eternity! who can properly paraphrase upon the words—forever and ever!"

In this kind of strain he continued till his strength was exhausted, and his dissolution approached; when, recovering a little breath, with a groan so dreadful and loud, as if it had not been human, he cried out, "Oh! the insufferable pangs of hell and damnation!" and so died; death settling the visage of his face in such a form, as if the body, though dead, was sensible of the extremity of torments.

Emerson was an infidel, and one of the first mathematicians of the age. Though, in some respects, he might be considered a worthy man, his conduct through life, was rude, vulgar, and frequently immoral. He paid no attention to religious duties, and both intoxication and profane language were familiar to him. Towards the close of his days, being afflicted with the stone, he would crawl about the floor on his hands and knees, sometimes praying, and sometimes swearing. What a poor creature is man without religion! Newton died of the same disorder, which was attended, at times, with such severe paroxysms as forced out large drops of sweat down his face. In these trying circumstances, however, he was never observed to utter the smallest complaint, or to express the least impatience. What a striking contrast between the conduct of the infidel and the Christian!

Voltaire, during a long life, was continually treating the Holy Scriptures with contempt, and endeavouring to spread the poison of infidelity among the nations. In his last illness he sent for Tronchin. When the doctor came, he found Voltaire in the greatest agonies, exclaiming with the utmost horror—I am abandoned by God and man. Doctor, I will give you half of what I am worth, if you will give me

six months life. The doctor answered, Sir, you cannot live six weeks. Voltaire replied, Then I shall go to hell, and you will go with me! and soon after expired.

This is the hero of modern infidels! Dare any of them say,—Let me die the death of Voltaire, and let my last end be like his? That he was a man of great and various talents, none can deny; but his want of sound learning, and moral qualifications, will ever prevent him from being ranked with the benefactors of mankind. If the reader have felt himself injured by the poison of this man's writings, he may find relief for his wounded mind, by perusing Findlay's *Vindication of the Sacred Books from the misrepresentations and cavils of Voltaire*; and Lefanu's *Letters of certain Jews to Voltaire*. The hoary infidel cuts but a very sorry figure in the hands of these sons of Abraham.

During Voltaire's last visit to Paris, when his triumph was complete, and he had even feared that he should die with glory, amidst the acclamations of an infatuated theatre, he was struck by the hand of Providence, and fated to make a very different termination of his career.

In the midst of his triumphs, a violent hemorrhage raised apprehensions for his life. D'Alembert, Diderot, and Marmontel, hastened to support his resolution in his last moments, but were only witnesses to their mutual ignominy, as well as to his own. Rage, remorse, reproach, and blasphemy, all accompany and characterize the long agony of the dying atheist.

On his return from the theatre, and in the midst of the toils he was resuming to acquire fresh applause, Voltaire was warned, that the long career of his impiety was drawing to an end.

In spite of all the sophisters flocking around him, in the first days of illness, he gave signs of wishing to return to the God whom he had so often blasphemed. He called for the priest. His danger increasing,

he wrote the following note to the Abbé Gaultier:—  
 You had promised me Sir, to come and hear me. I intreat you would take the trouble of calling on me as soon as possible.—Signed VOLTAIRE. Paris, the 26th Feb. 1778.

A few days after he wrote the following declaration, in presence of the Abbé Gaultier, the Abbé Mignot, and the Marquis de Villevieille, copied from the minutes deposited with Mr. Momet, notary at Paris:

“ I the underwritten, declare, that for these four days past, having been afflicted with a vomiting of blood, at the age of eighty-four, and not having been able to drag myself to the church, the Rev. the Rector of Sulpice, having been pleased to add to his good works, that of sending to me the Abbé Gaultier; I confessed to him; and if it pleases God to dispose of me, I die in the church, in which I was born; hoping that the divine mercy will deign to pardon all my faults. Second of March, 1778. Signed VOLTAIRE; in presence of the Abbé Mignot, my nephew, and the Marquis de Villevieille, my friend.”

After the two witnesses had signed this declaration, Voltaire added these words, copied from the same minutes:—“ The Abbé Gaultier, my confessor, having apprized me, that it was said among a certain set of people, that I ‘should protest against every thing I did at my death;’ I declare that I never made such a speech, and that it is an old jest, attributed long since to many of the learned, more enlightened than I am.”

This declaration is also signed by the Marquis de Villevieille, to whom, eleven years before, Voltaire wrote, “ Conceal your march from the enemy, in your endeavours to crush the wretch!”(7)

(7) It had been customary during many years for Voltaire to call our blessed Saviour—The Wretch. And he vowed that he would crush him. He closes many of his letters to his infidel-friends with the same words—crush the wretch!

Voltaire had permitted this declaration to be carried to the rector of Sulpice, and to the archbishop of Paris, to know whether it would be sufficient. When The Abbé Gaultier returned with the answer, it was impossible for him to gain admittance to the patient. The conspirators strained every nerve to hinder the chief from consummating his recantation, and every avenue was shut to the priest; whom Voltaire himself had sent for. The demons haunted every access; rage succeeded to fury, and fury to rage again, during the remainder of his life.

D'Alembert, Diderot, and about twenty others of the conspirators, who had beset his apartment, never approached him, but to witness their own ignominy, and often he would curse them, and exclaim: "Retire! It is you that have brought me to my present state! Begone! I could have done without you all; but you could not exist without me! And what a wretched glory have you procured me!"

Then would succeed the horrid remembrance of his conspiracy. They could hear him the prey of anguish and dread, alternately supplicating or blaspheming that God against whom he had conspired; and in plaintive accents would he cry out, "Oh Christ! Oh Jesus Christ!" And then complain that he was abandoned by God and man. The hand which had traced in ancient writ the sentence of an impious and reviling king, seemed to trace before his eyes, "Crush then, do crush the Wretch." In vain he turned his head away; the time was coming apace, when he was to appear before the tribunal of him whom he had blasphemed; and his physicians, particularly Mr. Tronchin, calling to administer relief, thunderstruck, retired, declaring the death of the impious man to be terrible indeed. The pride of the conspirators would willingly have suppressed these declarations, but it was in vain. The Mareschal de Richelieu fled from the bed side, declaring it to be a sight too terrible to be sustained; and Mr. Tronchin, that the furies of

Grestes could give but a faint idea of those of Voltaire.(8)

Addison tells us of a gentleman in France, who was so zealous a promoter of infidelity, that he had collected a select company of disciples, and travelled into all parts of the kingdom to make converts. In the midst of his fantastical success, he fell sick and was reclaimed to such a sense of his condition, that after he had passed some time in great agonies and horrors of mind, he begged those who had the care of burying him, to dress his body in the habit of a capuchin, that the devil might not run away with it; and, to do further justice upon himself, he desired them to tie a halter about his neck, as a mark of that ignominious punishment, which, in his own thoughts he had so justly deserved.

The last days of David Hume were spent in playing at whist, in cracking his jokes about Charon and his boat, and in reading Lucian, and other entertaining books. This was a consummatum est worthy of a clever fellow, whose conscience was seared as with an hot iron! Dr. Johnston observes upon this impenitent death-bed scene—"Hume owned he had never read the New Testament with attention. Here then was a man, who had been at no pains to inquire in-

(8) Diderot and D'Alembert, his friends and companions in infidelity, died with remorse of conscience somewhat similar to the above.

This account of the unhappy end of Voltaire is confirmed by a letter from M. de Luc, an eminent philosopher, and a man of the strictest honour and probity.

Cowper has alluded to the above circumstances in the character of this arch-infidel.

"The Frenchman first in literary fame,  
Mention him if you please—Voltaire?—The same.  
With spirit, genius, eloquence supplied,  
Liv'd long, wrote much, laugh'd heartily, and died:  
The Scripture was his jest-book, whence he drew  
Bon-mots to gall the Christian and the Jew.  
An infidel in health; but what when sick?  
Oh then, a text would touch him to the quick."

to the truth of religion, and had continually turned his mind the other way. It was not to be expected that the prospect of death should alter his way of thinking, unless God should send an angel to set him right. He had a vanity in being thought easy." Dives fared sumptuously every day, and saw no danger: But—the next thing we hear of him is—In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments!(9)

Gibbon says, "He died the death of a philosopher!" If philosophers die in such a manner, may it be my lot to die like an old fashioned and enthusiastic Christian !(10)

(9) It is much to be lamented that a man of Hume's abilities should have so prostituted his talents. With all his pretensions to philosophy, he was an advocate for adultery and suicide. The reader will find a sufficient answer to his sophistry in Horne's letters on infidelity, Beattie's essay on the nature and immutability of truth, and Campbell on the miracles of Christ.

(10) Gibbon was one of the most respectable deists of the present age, and more like unto Hume, than any other of the opposers of christianity. Very sufficient reasons, however, are to be given for his infidelity. Porson, in the preface to his letters to Travis, after giving a character of Gibbon's history, seems to me to account for his rejecting the gospel in a satisfactory manner, from the state of his mind. "He shews, so strong a dislike to christianity, as visibly disqualifies him for that society, of which he has created Ammianus Marcellinus president: and we must blame him for carrying on the attack in an insidious manner, and with improper motives. He often makes, when he cannot readily find an occasion to insult our religion; which he hates so cordially that he might seem to revenge some personal injury. Such is his eagerness in the cause, that he stoops to the most despicable pun, or to the most awkward perversion of language, for the pleasure of turning Scripture into ribaldry, or of calling Jesus an impostor. A rage for indecency pervades the whole work, but especially the last volumes.—If the history were anonymous, I should guess that these disgraceful obscenities were written by some debauchee, who having from age, or accident, or excess, survived the practice of lust, still indulged himself in the luxury of speculation; and exposed the impotent imbecility, after he had lost the vigour of the passions."

Such are the opposers of Jesus and his gospel!—Let us see how this sneering antagonist of christianity terminated his mortal career.

Eager for the continuation of his present existence, having little expectation of any future one, he declared to a friend about twen-

Of all the accounts which are left us, of the latter end of those, who are gone before into the eternal state, several are more horrible, but few so affecting as that which is given us by his own pen, of the late lord Chesterfield. It shews us incontestably, what a poor creature man is, notwithstanding the highest polish which he is capable of receiving, without the knowledge and experience of those satisfactions which true religion yields; and what egregious fools all those persons are, who squander away their precious time, in what the world, by a strange perversion of language, calls pleasure.

"I have enjoyed all the pleasures of this world, and consequently know their futility; and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which in truth, is very low, whereas those who have not experienced, always over-rate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare; but I have been behind the scenes. It is a common notion, and like many common ones, a very false one, that those, who have led a life of pleasure and business, can never be easy in retirement; whereas I am persuaded that they are the only people who can, if they have any sense and reflection.—They can look back without an evil eye upon what they from knowledge despise; others have always a hankering after what they are not acquainted with. I look upon all

ty-four hours previous to his departure, in a flow of self-gratulation, that he thought himself sure of a good life for ten, twelve, or perhaps twenty years.—And during his short illness; it is observable, that he never gave the least intimation of a future state of existence. This insensibility at the hour of dissolution, is in the language of scepticism, dying like a clever fellow, the death of a philosopher!

Among all the numerous volumes that Gibbon read, it does not appear that he ever perused any able defence, or judicious explication of the Christian religion.—Consult his memoirs and diary written by himself.—His conversion and reconversion terminated in deism; or rather perhaps, in a settled indifference to all religion. He never gave himself any concern about it.

that has passed, as one of those romantic dreams that opium commonly occasions, and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose, for the sake of the fugitive dream.—When I say that I have no regret, I do not mean that I have no remorse, for a life either of business, or still more of pleasure, never was, and never will be, a state of innocence. But God, who knows the strength of human passions, and the weakness of human reason, will, it is to be hoped, rather mercifully pardon, than justly punish, acknowledged errors. I have been as wicked and as vain, though not so wise as Solomon: but am now at last wise enough to feel and attest the truth of his reflection, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. This truth is never sufficiently discovered or felt by mere speculation: experience in this case is necessary for conviction, though perhaps at the expence of some morality.—My health is always bad, though sometimes better and sometimes worse; and my deafness deprives me of the comforts of society, which other people have in their illnesses. This you must allow, is an unfortunate latter end of life, and consequently a tiresome one; but I must own too, that it is a sort of balance to the tumultuous and imaginary pleasures of the former part of it. I consider my present wretched old age as a just compensation for the follies, not to say, sins of my youth. At the same time I am thankful that I feel none of those torturing ills, which frequently attend the last stage of life, and I flatter myself that I shall go off quietly, and with resignation. My stay in this world cannot be long: God, who placed me here, only knows when he will order me out of it; but whenever he does, I shall willingly obey his command. I wait for it, imploring the mercy of my Creator, and deprecating his justice. The best of us must trust to the former, and dread the latter.—I think I am not afraid of my journey's end, but will not answer for myself, when the object draws very near, and is very sure. For when one does see death

near, let the best or the worst people say what they please, it is a serious consideration. The divine attribute of mercy, which gives us comfort, cannot make us forget the attribute of justice, which must blend some fears with our hope.—Life, is neither a burden nor a pleasure to me ; but a certain degree of ennui necessarily attends that neutral state, which makes me very willing to part with it, when He who placed me here, thinks fit to call me away. When I reflect, however, upon the poor remainder of my life, I look upon it as a burden that must every day grow heavier, from the natural progression of physical ills, the usual companions of increasing years, and my reason tells me, that I should wish for the end of it ; but instinct, often stronger than reason, and perhaps oftener in the right, makes me take all proper methods to put it off. This innate sentiment alone makes me bear life with patience : for I assure you I have no farther hopes, but, on the contrary, many fears from it. None of the primitive Anachoretes in the Thebais could be more detached from life than I am. I consider it as one who is wholly unconcerned in it, and even when I reflect upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done myself, I can hardly persuade myself that all the frivolous hurry and bustle, and pleasures of the world, had any reality, but they seem to have been the dreams of restless nights. This philosophy, however, I thank God, neither makes me sour nor melancholic : I see the folly and absurdity of mankind, without indignation or peevishness. I wish them wiser, and consequently better than they are are."(1)

(1) The letters of this nobleman which he wrote to his son, contain positive evidence, that, with all his honours, learning, wit, politeness, he was a thorough bad man, with a heart full of deceit and uncleanness. Those letters have been a pest to this nation. It may be questioned whether Rochester's poems ever did more harm. This nobleman was accounted, not only the most polite and well bred man of his time, but the greatest wit. Vari-

This is the life, these are the mortifying acknowledgments, and this is the poor sneaking end of the best bred man of the age! Not one word about Mediator! He acknowledges, indeed, his frailties; but yet in such a way as to extenuate his offences. One would suppose him to have been an old heathen philosopher, that had never heard of the name of Jesus, rather than a penitent Christian, whose life had abounded with a variety of vices.

How little is man, in his most finished estate, without religion! Let us hear in what manner the lively believer in Jesus takes his leave of this mortal scene: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righte-

ous Jeux d'Esprit proceeded from him, on different occasions. The two following, which contain an allusion to the Sacred Writings, I will present to the reader.

Chesterfield being invited to dine with the Spanish ambassador, met with the minister of France, and some others. After dinner, the Spaniard proposed a toast, and begged to give his master under the title of the sun. The French ambassador's turn came next, who gave his, under the description of the moon. Chesterfield being asked for his, replied, "your excellencies have taken from me all the greatest luminaries of heaven, and the stars are too small for a comparison with my royal master; I therefore beg leave to give your excellencies, Joshua!"

The earl, being at Brussels, was waited on by Voltaire, who politely invited him to sup with him and madame C——. His lordship accepted the invitation. The conversation happening to turn on the affairs of England, "I think, my lord," said madame C——, "that the parliament of England consists of five or six hundred of the best informed and most sensible men in the kingdom?"—"True madame; they are generally supposed to be so."—"What then, my lord, can be the reason that they tolerate so great an absurdity as the Christian religion?"—"I suppose madame," replied his lordship. "it is because they have not been able to substitute any thing better in its stead; when they can, I don't doubt but in their wisdom they will readily accept it."

To have entered into a serious defence of the gospel of Christ, would have been the height of folly; but such an answer as this, was calculated to silence her better than a thousand demonstrations, which she would neither have been able nor willing to understand.

ousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day."

"The sad evening before the death of the noble Altamont, I was with him. No one was there, but his physician, and an intimate friend whom he loved, and whom he had ruined. At my coming in, he said;—“You and the physician, are come too late. I have neither life, nor hope. You both aim at miracles. You would raise the dead.”—Heaven I said was merciful. “Or I could not have been thus guilty. What has it not done to bless and to save me?—I have been too strong for Omnipotence! I plucked down ruin!” I said, The blessed Redeemer—“Hold! hold! you wound me!—This is the rock on which I split—I denied his name.” Refusing to hear any thing from me, or take any thing from the physician, he lay silent as far as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock struck. Then with vehemence; “O time! time! it is fit thou shouldst thus strike thy murderer to the heart.—How art thou fled forever!—A month!—Oh! for a single week! I ask not for years; though an age were too little for the much I have to do.” On my saying, we could not do too much: that heaven was a blessed place—“So much the worse. ’Tis lost!—Heaven is to me the severest part of hell!” Soon after I proposed prayer.—“Pray you that can. I never prayed. I cannot pray—Nor need I. Is not heaven on my side already? It closes with my conscience. Its severest strokes but second my own.” His friend being much touched, even to tears, at this—who could forbear? I could not;—with a most affectionate look he said: “Keep those tears for thyself. I have undone thee.—Dost weep for me? That’s cruel.—What can pain me more?” Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him. “No, stay. Thou still mayest hope. Therefore hear me. How madly have I talked? how madly hast thou listened and believed? But look on my present state, as a full answer to thee, and to myself. This body is all

weakness and pain; but my soul, as if stung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason, full mighty to suffer. And that which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality is doubtless, immortal.—And, as for a deity, nothing less than an Almighty could inflict what I feel.”—I was about to congratulate this passive, involuntary confessor, on his asserting the two prime articles of his creed, extorted by the rack of nature; when he thus, said very passionately: “No, no! let me speak on. I have not long to speak.—My much injured friend! my soul, as my body, lies in ruins; in scattered fragments of broken thought: remorse for the past, throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray. Didst thou feel the mountain that is on me, thou wouldest struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flames:—that is not everlasting flame; that is not an unquenchable fire.” How were we struck! Yet, soon after still more. With what an eye of distraction, what a face of despair, he cried out; “My principles have poisoned my friend; my extravagance has beggared my boy; my unkindness has murdered my wife! And is there another hell?—Oh! thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent, Lord God! Hell is a refuge, if it hides me from thy frown.”

“Soon after his understanding failed. His terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgotten. And ere the sun arose, the gay, young, noble, ingenious, and most wretched Altamont expired.”

It is not easy for imagination itself to form a more affecting representation of a death-bed scene than that of this noble youth.

Sir,

I was not long since called to visit a poor gentleman, ere while of the most robust body, and of the gayest

temper I ever knew. But when I visited him; Oh! how was the glory departed from him! I found him no more that sprightly and vivacious son of joy which he used to be; but languishing, pining away, and withering under the chastising hand of God. His limbs feeble and trembling: his countenance forlorn and ghastly; and the little breath he had left, sobbed out in sorrowful sighs! his body hastening apace to the dust, to lodge in the silent grave, the land of darkness and desolation. His soul just going to God who gave it; preparing itself to wing away unto its long home; to enter upon an unchangeable and eternal state. When I was come up into his chamber, and had seated myself on his bed, he first cast a wishful look upon me, and then began as well as he was able to speak: "Oh! that I had been wise, that I had known this, that I had considered my latter end. Ah! death is knocking at my doors: in a few hours more I shall draw my last gasp; and then judgment, the tremendous judgment! How shall I appear, unprepared as I am, before the all-knowing and omnipotent God? How shall I endure the day of his coming!" When I mentioned among many other things, that strict holiness, which he had formerly so slightly esteemed, he replied with a hasty eagerness: "Oh! that holiness is the only thing I now long for. I would gladly part with all my estate, large as it is, or a world to obtain it. Now my benighted eyes are enlightened, I clearly discern the things that are excellent. What is there in the place whither I am going but God? Or what is there to be desired on earth but religion?"—But if this God should restore you to health, said I, think you that you should alter your former course? "I call heaven and earth to witness," said he, "I would labour for holiness, as I shall soon labour for life. As for riches and pleasures, and the applauses of men, I account them as dross and dung; no more to my happiness than the feathers that lie on the floor. Oh! if the righteous Judge would try me

once more ; if he would but reprieve and spare me little longer ; in what a spirit would I spend the remainder of my days ! I would know no other business, aim at no other end, than perfecting myself in holiness. Whatever contributed to that ; every means of grace, every opportunity of spiritual improvement, should be dearer to me, than thousands of gold and silver. But alas ! why do I amuse myself with fond imaginations ? The best resolutions are now insignificant, because they are too late. The day in which I should have worked is over and gone, and I see a sad, horrible night approaching, bringing with it the blackness of darkness for ever. Heretofore, woe is me ! when God called, I refused ; when he invited, I was one of them that made excuse. Now, therefore I meet the reward of my deeds ; fearfulness and trembling have come upon me : I smart, and am in sore anguish already ! and yet this is but the beginning of sorrows ! it doth not yet appear what I shall be ; but sure I shall be ruined, undone, and destroyed with an everlasting destruction !”

This sad scene I saw with mine eyes ; these words and many more equally affecting, I heard with mine ears, and soon after attended the unhappy gentleman to his tomb.(2)

(2) If the stings, lashes, twinges, and scorpions of a guilty conscience are so horrible, while we continue in the body, what must they be, when we are dislodged by death, and find that our damnation is sealed by the Judge Supreme ? Let the lost soul in Shakespeare speak some little of future woe :

“ But that I am forbid  
 To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
 I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word  
 Would harrow up thy soul ; freeze thy warm blood ;  
 Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres ;  
 Thy knotted and combined locks to part,  
 And each particular hair to stand on end,  
 Like quills upon the freiful porcupine :  
 But this eternal blazon must not be  
 To ears of flesh and blood.”

Cumberland, gives us a most mournful tale concerning a gentleman of infidel principles. "I remember him, in the height of his fame, the hero of his party; no man so caressed, followed and applauded: he was a little loose, his friends would own, in his moral character, but then he was the honestest fellow in the world; it was not to be denied, that he was rather free in his notions, but then he was the best creature living. I have seen men of the gravest characters wink at his sallies; because he was so pleasant and so well bred, it was impossible to be angry with him. Every thing went well with him, and Antitheus seemed to be at the summit of human prosperity, when he was suddenly seized with the most alarming symptoms: he was at his country house, and which had rarely happened to him, at that time alone: wife or family he had none, and out of the multitude of his friends no one happened to be near him at the moment of his attack. A neighbouring physician was called out of bed in the night to come to him with all haste in this extremity: he found him sitting up in his bed supported by pillows, his countenance full of horror, his breath struggling as in the article of death, his pulse intermitting, and at times beating with such rapidity as could hardly be counted. Antitheus dismissed the attendants he had about him, and eagerly demanded of the physician, if he thought him in danger: the physician answered that he must fairly tell him he was in imminent danger.—*How so! how so! do you think me dying?*—He was sorry to say, the symptoms indicated death.—*Impossible! you must not let me die: I dare not die: O doctor! save me if you can.*—Your situation, sir, is such, that it is not in mine, or any other man's art, to save you; and I think I should not do my duty, if I gave you any false hopes in these moments, which, if I am not mistaken, will not more than suffice for any worldly or other concerns, which you may have upon your mind to settle.—*My mind is full of horror, and I am*

*incapable of preparing it for death.—He now fell into an agony, accompanied with a shower of tears; a cordial was administered, and he revived in a degree; when turning to the physician, who had his fingers upon his pulse, he eagerly demanded of him if he did not see that blood upon the feet-curtain of his bed. There was none to be seen, the physician assured him; it was nothing but a vapour of his fancy.—I see it plainly, in the shape of a human hand: I have been visited with a tremendous apparition. As I was lying sleepless in my bed this night, I took up a letter of a deceased friend, to dissipate certain thoughts that made me uneasy: I believed him to be a great philosopher, and was converted to his opinions: persuaded by his arguments and my own experience, that the disorderly affairs of this evil world would not be administered by any wise, just or provident being, I had brought myself to think that no such being could exist, and that a life produced by chance, must terminate in annihilation; this is the reasoning of that letter, and such were the thoughts I was revolving in my mind, when the apparition of my dear friend presented itself before me; and unfolding the curtains of my bed, stood at my feet, looking earnestly upon me for a considerable space of time. My heart sunk within me; for his face was ghastly, full of horror, with an expression of such an anguish as I can never describe; his eyes were fixed upon me, and at length with a mournful motion of his head—Alas, alas! he cried, we are in a fatal error!—and taking hold of the curtains with his hand, shook them violently and disappeared.—This I protest to you, I both saw and heard; and look! where the print of his hand is left in blood upon the curtains!"*

Antitheus survived the relation of this vision very few hours, and died delirious in great agonies.

What a forsaken and disconsolate creature is man without his God and Saviour!

Rousseau was born at Geneva; and, at a proper age, was bound a prentice to an artist. During his ap-

prenticeship he frequently robbed his master as well as other persons. Before his time was expired he decamped, fled into the dominions of the king of Sardinia, where he professed to be a catholic. By an unexpected turn of fortune he became a footman; in which capacity he forgot not his old habit of stealing. He was detected with the stolen goods; swore that they were given him by a maid servant of the house; the girl was confronted with him; she denied the fact, and, weeping, pressed him to confess the truth; but the young philosopher still persisted in the lie, and the poor girl was driven from her place in disgrace.

Tired of being a serving man, he went to throw himself on the protection of a lady, whom he had seen once before, and who, he protests, was the most virtuous creature of her sex. The lady had so great a regard for him, that she called him her little darling, and he called her mamma. Mamma had a footman, who served her besides, in another capacity, very much resembling that of a husband; but she had a most tender affection for her adopted son Rousseau; and, as she feared he was forming connections with a certain lady which might spoil his morals, she herself, out of pure virtue, took him—to bed with her!—This virtuous effort to preserve the purity of Rousseau's heart, had a dreadful effect upon the poor footman, for he poisoned himself.—Rousseau fell sick, and mamma was obliged to part with little darling, while he performed a journey to the south of France, for the recovery of his health. On the road he dined with a gentleman, and debauched his wife. He was returning back, he debated with himself whether he should pay his lady a second visit or not; but fearing he might be tempted to seduce her daughter also, virtue got the better, and determined the little darling to fly home into the arms of his mamma: but, alas! those arms were filled with another. Mamma's virtue had prompted her to take a substitute, whom she liked too well to part with, and our philosopher was obliged to

shift for himself. While the little darling resided with his mamma, he made a tour with a young musician. Their friendship was warm, like that of most young men, and they were, besides, enjoined to take particular care of each other during their travels.—They went for some time together, agreed perfectly well, and vowed an everlasting friendship for each other. But the musician, being one day taken in a fit, fell down in the street, which furnished the faithful Rousseau with an opportunity of slipping off with some of his things, and leaving him to the mercy of the people, in a town where he was a total stranger.

We seldom meet with so much villainy as this in a youth. His manhood was, however, worthy of it. He turned apostate a second time, was driven from within the walls of his native city of Geneva, as an incendiary, and an apostle of anarchy and infidelity ; nor did he forget how to thieve.—At last the philosopher marries ; but like a philosopher. He has a family of children, and like a kind philosophical father, for fear they should want after his death, he sends them to the poor-house during his life time !—The philosopher dies and leaves the philosophress his wife to the protection of a friend ; she marries a footman, and is turned into the street.

This vile wretch has the impudence to say, in the work written by himself, which contains a confession of these his crimes, that no man can come to the throne of God, and say, I am a better man than Rousseau.

Notwithstanding the above circumstances, it must be owned that Rousseau's writings have great literary merit, but they contain principles the most vitiating. He has exhausted all the powers of reasoning, and all the charms of eloquence in the cause of irreligion. And his writings are so much the more dangerous, as he winds himself into favour with the unwary, by an eternal cant about virtue and liberty. He assumed the mask of virtue for no other purpose than that of propagating with more certain success, the blackest and most incorrigible vice.

Rousseau expired with a lie in his mouth, and the most impious appeal to the Divine Being, that was ever made by mortal man.

"Ah! my dear," said he just before he expired, "how happy a thing it is to die when one has no reason for remorse or self reproach!"—And then addressing himself to the Almighty, he said, "Eternal Being! the soul that I am going to give thee back, is as pure at this moment, as it was when it proceeded from thee; render it a partaker of thy felicity!"

These examples are such as to give but little encouragement to any person, who has a proper concern for his own welfare, to embark, either in the atheistic or deistic schemes. In those cases, where conscience was awake, the unhappy men were filled with anguish and amazement inexpressible. And in those cases, where conscience seemed to be asleep, there appears nothing enviable in their situation, even upon their own supposition, that there is no after reckoning. If to die like an ass be a privilege, I give them joy of it! much good may it do them! May I die like a Christian, having a hope blooming with immortal expectations!

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#### EXAMPLES OF PERSONS RECOVERED FROM THEIR INFIDELITY.

"If, sick of folly, I relent, he writes  
My name in heav'n."

CHARLES GILDON, author of a book called the *Oracles of Reason*, was convinced of the fallacy of his own arguments against religion, and the danger of his situation, by reading Leslie's *Short Method* with a Deist. He afterwards wrote a defence of revealed religion, entitled the *Deist's Manual*, and died in the Christian faith.

Lord Lyttleton, author of the History of Henry the Second, and Gilbert West, had both imbibed the principles of unbelief, and had agreed together to write something in favour of infidelity. To do this more effectually, they judged it necessary to acquaint themselves pretty well with the Bible. By the perusal of that book, however, they were both convinced of their error: both became converts to the religion of Christ Jesus; both took up their pens and wrote in favour of it: (3) the former his Observations on the

(3) Athenagoras, a philosopher, in the second century, had entertained so unfavourable an opinion of the Christian religion, that he was determined to write against it; but upon an intimate inquiry into the facts on which it was supported, in the course of his collecting materials for his intended publication, he was convinced by the blaze of evidence in its favour, and turned his designed invective into an elaborate apology, which is still in existence.

The above Mr. West, writing to Dr. Doddridge on the publication of his memoirs of colonel Gardiner, ascribes his own conversion from a state of infidelity, into which he had been seduced, to the care his mother had taken in his education. "I cannot help taking notice," says he, "of your remarks upon the advantage of an early education in the principles of religion, because I have myself most happily experienced it: since I owe to the early care of a most excellent woman, my mother, that bent and bias to religion, which with the co-operating grace of God, hath at length brought me back to those paths of peace from whence I might have otherwise been in danger of deviating forever."

Johnson tells us, that, "Lord Lyttleton, in the pride of juvenile confidence, with the help of corrupt conversation, entertained doubts of the truth of christianity; but he thought afterwards it was no longer fit to doubt, or believe by chance, he therefore applied himself seriously to the great question. His studies being honest, ended in conviction. He found, that religion was true, and, what he had learned, he endeavoured to teach, by observations on the conversion of St. Paul; a treatise to which infidelity has never been able to fabricate a specious answer."—Two days previous to his dissolution, this great and good man addressed his physician in these memorable words:—"Doctor, you shall be my confessor. When I first set out in the world, I had friends who endeavoured to shake my belief in the Christian religion. I saw difficulties which staggered me, but I kept my mind open to conviction. The evidences and doctrines of christianity, studied with attention, made me a most firm and persuaded believer of the Christian religion. I have made it the rule of my life, and—it is the ground of my future hopes."

Conversion of St. Paul; the latter, his Observations on the resurrection of Christ; and both died in peace.

Pringle, one of the first characters of the present age, though blessed with a religious education, contracted the principles of infidelity, when he travelled abroad. But as he scorned to be an implicit believer, he was equally averse from being an implicit unbeliever. He therefore set himself to examine the principles of the gospel of Christ, with all caution and seriousness. The result of his investigation was, a full conviction of the divine original and authority of the gospel. The evidence of revelation appeared to him to be solid and invincible; and the nature of it to be such as demanded his warmest acceptance.

Soame Jenyns, by some means had been warped aside into the paths of infidelity, and continued in

The conversion of the present rector of St. Mary Woolneth, in London, is also extremely remarkable. He was born of religious parents, and brought up in his younger years in a religious manner. The impressions of this kind seemed to be strong and deep. At length, however, the admonitions of conscience, which from successive repulses, had grown weaker and weaker, entirely ceased; he commenced infidel; and for the space of many months, if not for some years, he does not recollect that he had a single check of that sort. At times he was visited with sickness, and believed himself near to death; but he had not the least concern about the consequence. He seemed to have had every mark of final impenitence and rejection; neither judgments nor mercies made the least impression on him.

In this unhappy condition he continued for a number of years, all the time improving himself under very unpropitious circumstances, in classical and mathematical learning. At the age of about twenty-three or twenty-four, however, it pleased God to call him by his grace, out of darkness and delusion into his marvellous light, and in due time into the glorious liberty of the children of God. He has lived now for many years under the power and influence of religion, and has been an eminent instrument of good to many thousands of souls by his preaching and writings.

It is remarkable that in this case also, a religious education seemed to be the remote means of his conversion, after all his wanderings from the path of duty.

this state of mind several years. Finding his spirit, however, not at rest, he was induced to examine the grounds upon which his unbelief was founded. He discovered his error; was led to believe in the Saviour of mankind; and wrote a small treatise in the defence of the gospel, entitled, a View of the internal Evidences of Christianity; a work worthy the perusal of every man, who wishes to understand the excellency of the religion which he professes.

Oliver, a famous physician, was a zealous unbeliever till within a short time of his death. Being convinced of his error, and the danger of his situation, he bewailed his past conduct with strong compunction of heart, and gave up his spirit at last, in confident expectation of mercy from God, through the merit of that Saviour, whom, for many years, he had ridiculed and opposed. "Oh," said he, "that I could undo the mischief that I have done! I was more ardent to poison people with the principles of irreligion and unbelief, than almost any Christian can be to spread the doctrines of Christ."

General Dykern received a mortal wound at the battle of Bergen in Germany, A. D. 1759. He was of a noble family, and possessed equal abilities as a minister in the closet, and a general in the field, being favoured with a liberal education. Having imbibed the principles of infidelity, he continued a professed deist, till the time he received his fatal wound. During his illness, however, a great and effectual change was wrought upon his mind by the power of divine grace, and he died in the full assurance of faith, glorying in the salvation of Jesus, and wondering at the happy change which had taken place in his soul.

John, earl of Rochester, was a great scholar, a great poet, a great sinner, and a great penitent. His life was written by Burnet, and his funeral sermon was preached and published by Mr. Parsons. Dr. Johnson, speaking of Burnet's life of this nobleman, says, "The critic ought to read it for its elegance,

the philosopher for its argument, and the saint for its piety."

His lordship, it appears, had advanced to an uncommon height of wickedness, having been an advocate in the black cause of atheism, and an encomiast to Beelzebub. He had raked too in the very bottom of the jakes of debauchery, and had been a satyrist against religion itself. But when, like the prodigal in the gospel, he came to himself, his mind was filled with the most extreme horror, which forced sharp and bitter invectives from him against himself; terming himself the vilest wretch that the sun ever shone upon; wishing he had been a crawling leper in a ditch, a link-boy, or a beggar, or had lived in a dungeon, rather than offended God in the manner he had done.

Upon the first visit of Mr. Parsons to him on May 26th, 1680, after a journey from the West, he found him labouring under great trouble of mind, and his conscience full of terror. The earl told him—"When on his journey, he had been arguing with greater vigour against God and religion, than ever he had done in his life-time before, and that he had been resolved to run them down with all the argument and spite in the world; but like the great convert, Paul, he found it hard to kick against God." At this time, however, his heart was so powerfully affected, that he argued as much for God and religion, as ever he had done against them.—He had such tremendous apprehensions of the Divine Majesty, mingled with such delightful contemplations of his nature and perfections, and of the amiableness of religion, that he said,—“I never was advanced thus far towards happiness in my life before; though upon the commission of some sins extraordinary, I have had some considerable checks and warnings from within; but still I struggled with them, and so wore them off again. One day, at an atheistical meeting in the house of a person of quality, I undertook to manage the cause, and was the principal disputant against God and religion; and

or my performances received the applauses of the hole company.—Upon this my mind was terribly ruck, and I immediately replied thus to myself—Good God, that a man that walks upright, that sees the wonderful works of God, and has the use of his sens and reason, should use them to the defying of his Creator!—But though this was a good beginning towards my conversion, to find my conscience touchful for my sins, yet it went off again: nay, all my life long, I had a secret value and reverence for an honest man, and loved morality in others. But I had formed an odd scheme of religion to myself, which would give all that God or conscience might force upon me; but I was never reconciled to the business of christianity; nor had I that reverence for the gospel of christ, which I ought to have had."

This state of mind continued till the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was read to him, together with some other parts of the sacred Scriptures; when it pleased God to fill his mind with such peace and joy in believing, that it was remarkable to all about him, upon which he used to enlarge in a very familiar and affectionate manner, applying the whole to his own humiliation and encouragement.

"O blessed God," would he say, "can such a horrid creature as I am be accepted by thee, who have denied thy Being, and contemned thy power? Can there be mercy and pardon for me? Will God own such a wretch as I?"

In the middle of his sickness he said still farther:—"Shall the unspeakable joys of heaven be conferred on me? O mighty Saviour, never but through thine infinite love and satisfaction! O never but by the purse of thy blood."—adding—"that with all abhorrence he reflected upon his former life—that from his heart he repented of all that folly and madness of which he had been guilty."

He had a strong and growing esteem for the sacred scriptures, and evidently saw their divine fulness and

excellency:—" For, having spoken to his heart, he acknowledged, all the seeming absurdities and contradictions fancied by men of corrupt and reprobate judgments, were vanished ; and the excellency and beauty of them appeared conspicuously, now that he was come to receive the truth in the love of it."

During his illness he had a hearty concern for the pious education of children, wishing " his son might never be a wit, one of those wretched creatures who pride themselves in abusing God and religion, denying his Being or his Providence ; but that he might become an honest man ; and of a truly religious character, which only could be the support and blessing of his family."

One of his companions coming to see him on his death-bed, he said to him:—" O remember that you contemn God no more. He is an avenging God, and will visit you for your sins ; and will, I hope, in mercy touch your conscience, sooner or later, as he has done mine.—You and I have been friends and sinners together a great while, therefore I am the more free with you.—We have been all mistaken in our conceits and opinions; our persuasions have been false and groundless; therefore I pray God grant you repentance."

When he drew towards the last stage of his sickness, he said, " If God should spare me yet a little longer time here, I hope to bring glory to his name, proportionably to the dishonour I have done to him in my whole life ; and particularly by my endeavours to convince others, and to assure them of the danger of their condition, if they continued impenitent ; and to tell them how graciously God hath dealt with me."

And when he came within still nearer viwes of dissolution, about three or four days before it, he said,—" I shall now die; but, Oh ; what unspeakable glories do I see ! What joys, beyond thought or expression am I sensible of ! I am assured of God's mercy

to me through Jesus Christ ! Oh ! how I long to die, and be with my Saviour ? ”

For the admonition of others, and to undo as much as was in his power, the mischief of his former conduct, he subscribed the following recantation, and ordered it to be published after his death :

“ For the benefit of all those, whom I may have drawn into sin by my example and encouragement, I leave to the world this my last declaration : which I deliver in the presence of the great God, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be judged : That from the bottom of my soul I detest and abhor the whole course of my former wicked life ; that I think I can never sufficiently admire the goodness of God, who has given me a true sense of my pernicious opinions and vile practices, by which I have hitherto lived without hope, and without God in the world : have been an open enemy to Jesus Christ, doing the utmost despite to the Holy Spirit of grace : and that the greatest testimony of my charity to such, is to warn them, in the name of God, as they regard the welfare of their immortal souls, no more to deny his Being or his Providence, or despise his goodness ; no more to make a mock of sin, or contemn the pure and excellent religion of my ever-blessed Redeemer, through whose merits alone, I, one of the greatest of sinners, do yet hope for mercy and forgiveness. Amen.” (3)

(3) The case of Duncomb Colchester was somewhat like this of Rochester. He was a gentleman of excellent parts, a generous spirit, and undaunted courage. Having, however, spent many years, in sundry extravagances, he was at length, by a long and painful sickness, brought to a very serious sense of the excellency of religion, and of his own great sin and folly in the neglect and contempt of it. He accordingly, by way of making some small reparation for the mischief he had done by his wickedness, drew up an address to his friends and the public, somewhat like to the above of Rochester, signed by divers witnesses, and caused it to be read in two neighbouring churches, and spread abroad among all his friends and neighbours through the county, as extensively as he was able.

We have an account of the conversion of another determined deist to the faith of Christ, in six letters from a minister of the reformed church abroad, to Mr. Newton, of London. He was born of religious parents, was brought up at school and university for the ministry, became eminent for his literary attainments, but lost all his religion, and commenced deist. Proud of his abilities and attainments, and trusting solely to his reasoning powers, he disdained to think with the vulgar, and was too wise in his own esteem, to be instructed by divine revelation. But while he was unacquainted with God, he was guilty of secret impurities, and a stranger to peace, like a ship in a storm, without rudder or pilot, he was hurried along by tumultuous passions, till he grew weary of life. In such a state of soul, and at such a crisis, the light of heavenly truth broke in upon his mind. The Lord spake, and it was done. The storm was hushed. The man was powerfully and unexpectedly changed. The servant of sin became the servant of Christ: and he now preaches, with energy and success, the faith which he before laboured to destroy.(4)

John Lee, who was executed for forgery, became an infidel, through reading the elegant, but sophistical, writings of David Hume. Deeply, however, did he repeat his folly, when he was in distressed circumstances. "I leave to the world," said he, in a letter to a friend the night before his execution, "this mournful memento, that however much a man may be favoured by personal qualifications, or distinguished by mental endowments, genius will be useless, and

(4) Similar to this instance, in some respects, is the case of the Rev. Thomas Scott. "I feel myself impelled to declare," says he, "that I once was not much more disposed to credit the Scriptures than Mr. Paine: and having got rid of the shackles of education, was much flattered by my emancipation and superior discernment. But twenty years employed in diligently investigating the evidence and contents of the Bible, have produced in me an unshaken assurance that it is the word of God."

abilities avail but little, unless accompanied by a sense of religion, and attended by the practice of virtue."

A gentleman, whose name is concealed from delicacy to his connections, was descended of a noble and religious family. His life was extremely irregular and dissolute, but his natural parts and endowments of mind so extraordinary, that they rendered his conversation agreeable to persons of the highest rank and quality. Being taken ill, he believed he should die at the very beginning of his sickness. His friend, with whom he had frequently disputed against the existence of God, and the truths of revealed religion, visited him on the second day after he was seized. He asked him how he did, and what made him so dejected?

"Alas!" said he, "are you so void of understanding, as to imagine I am afraid to die? Far be such thoughts from me. I could meet death with as much courage as I have encountered an enemy in the field of battle, and embrace it as freely as I ever did any friend whom I entirely loved: for I see nothing in this world that is worth the pains of keeping. I have made trial of most states and conditions of life. I have been rich and poor. I have been raised to honour and reversed in a high degree. I have also been exposed to scorn and contempt. I have experienced the difference between virtue and vice, and every thing that was possible for a man in my station; so that I am capable of distinguishing what is really good and praise-worthy, and what is not. Now I see with a clearer sight than ever, and discern a vast difference between the vain licentious discourse of a libertine, and the sound arguments of a true believer: for though the former may express himself more finely than the latter, so as to puzzle him with hard questions and intricate notions, yet all amount to no more than the fallacy of a few airy repartees, which are never affected by sober Christians, nor capable of eluding the force of solid reason. But now I know how to make a distinction between them; and I wish from the bottom of my heart I had

been so sensible of my error in the time of my health ; then I had never had those foretastes of hell I now have. Oh ! what a sad account have I to give of a long life spent in sin and folly ! I look beyond the fears of a temporal death. All the dread that you perceive in me arises from the near approach I make to an eternal death ; for I must die to live to all eternity."

He continued in this manner to bewail his past folly, atheism, and infidelity for forty days, and then expired. His friend, however, took large pains with him to encourage his repentance, faith, and return to a proper state of mind. At last, however, he was brought to entertain some hope, that the Redeemer of mankind would take pity on his deplorable condition, pardon his sins, and rescue him from that everlasting destruction which awaits all such characters. He told his friend, therefore, that if he departed with a smile, he might hope for the best concerning him ; but if he should be seen to give up the ghost with a frown, there would be reason to fear the worst.

This was about three o'clock in the afternoon, and he lived till four the next morning. A little before he expired, he was heard to speak these words softly to himself—" Oh ! that I had possession of the meaneat place in heaven, and could but creep into one corner of it." Afterwards he cried out four several times together—O dear, dear, dear, dear,—and, near a minute before he expired, his friend perceived him to look full in his face, with a smiling countenance.

There we leave him till the resurrection-morn. (5)

(5) It is impossible for any man to say with certainty, whether the change, which seems to pass upon the human mind upon those melancholy occasions, is real and saving, or only apparent and delusive. We have known various instances, where every symptom of genuine repentance has been exhibited upon a sick-bed, but no sooner has health returned, than they have returned to folly with accelerated speed; fulfilling the old popish distich :

" When the devil was sick, the devil a monk would be ;  
When the devil got well, the devil a monk was he !"

When Struensee, prime minister of Denmark, had been disgraced and imprisoned for certain misdemeanors of which he had been guilty, he was brought from a state of infidelity to a serious sense of his situation. He then declared, "The more I learn christianity from Scripture, the more I grow convinced, how unjust these objections are with which it is charged. I find, for instance, that all which Voltaire says of the intolerance of Christians, and of blood-shedding caused by christianity, is a very unjust charge laid upon religion. It is easy to be seen, that those cruelties, said to be caused by religion, if properly considered, were the productions of human passions, selfishness and ambition, and that religion served in such cases only for a cloak.—I am fully convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, and I feel its power in quieting my conscience, and reforming my sentiments.—I have examined it during a good state of health, and with all the reason I am master of. I tried every argument, I felt no fear, I have taken my own time and I have not been in haste. I own with joy, I find christianity the more amiable the more I get acquainted with it. I never knew it before. I believed it contradicted reason, and the nature of man, whose religion it was designed to be. I thought it an artfully contrived and ambiguous doctrine, full of incomprehensibilities. Whenever I formerly thought on religion in some serious moments, I had always an idea in my mind how it ought to be, which was, it should be simple and accommodated to the abilities of men in every condition. I now find christianity to be exactly so; it answers entirely that idea which I had formed of true religion. Had I but formerly known it was such, I should not have delayed turning Christian till this time of my imprisonment. But I had the misfortune to be prejudiced against religion, first through my own passions, but afterwards likewise by so many human inventions, foisted into it, of which I could see plainly that they had no foundation, though they were styled essential parts of christi-

anity. I was offended when God was always represented to me as an angry, jealous judge, who is much pleased when he has an opportunity of shewing his revenge, though I knew he was love itself ; and am now convinced, that though he must punish, yet he takes no kind of delight in it, and is rather for pardoning. From my infancy, I have known but few Christians that had not scandalized me by their enthusiasm and wickedness, which they wanted to hide under the cloak of piety. I knew indeed that not all Christians were such, or talked such an affected language ; but I was too volatile to inquire of better Christians after the true spirit of religion. Frequently I heard sermons in my youth, but they made no impression upon me. That without Christ there was no salvation, was the only truth which served for a subject in all sermons, and this was repeated over and over again in synonymous expressions. But it was never set in its true light, and never properly proved. I saw people cry at church, but after their tears were dried up, I found them in their actions not in the least better, but rather allowing themselves in every transgression, upon the privilege of being faithful believers.—He said, he observed in Paul a great genius, much wisdom, and true philosophy. The apostles write extremely well, now and then inimitably beautiful, and at the same time with simplicity and clearness.—The Freethinkers extol the fables of *Æsop*, but the parables and narrations of Christ will not please them notwithstanding they are derived from a greater knowledge of nature, and contain more excellent morality. Besides, they are proposed with a more noble and artless simplicity, than any writings of the kind, among ancient or modern authors."

Brandt, the companion of Struensee in guilt and misfortunes, with great freedom owned that his imprisonment was the means of setting his soul at liberty; and he found his chains so little troublesome to him, that he would oftentimes take them up and kiss them.

“ For,” said he, “ when I believed myself to be free, I was a miserable slave to my passions; and now since I am prisoner, truth and grace hath set me at liberty.” He pitied the miserable condition of those that were under the yoke of unbelief and sin, which he himself had worn, and kept himself in it by reading deistical writings. He mentioned, among the rest, the works of Voltaire, to whom he owed very little that was good. He said he had spent upon his travels four days with this old advocate for unbelief, and had heard nothing from him but what could corrupt the heart and sound morals. He was very sorry for all this, but was much pleased, that he had found a taste for the true word of God, whose efficacy upon his heart, since he read it with good intentions, convinced him of its divine origin.

It is usually said, that example has a more powerful effect upon the mind than precept. None can deny that these are respectable. They are such as every deist and sceptic in the kingdom should well consider, before he ventures his salvation upon the justness of his own principles. If equal danger, or if any danger, attended our embracing the Christian scheme, the unbeliever would be in a certain degree justified, in withholding his assent to that scheme: but as all the hazard is on his side of the question, and none on the other, language furnishes no words to express the extreme folly of treating religion with levity, much less with ridicule and contempt.

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#### EXAMPLES OF DYING CHRISTIANS, WHO HAD LIVED IN THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD.

This shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow. Is. L. 11.

Grotius possessed the brightest genius ever recorded of a youth in the learned world, and was a profound admirer, and a daily reader, of the Sacred Writings; yet after all his attainments, reputation, and

labour in the cause of learning, he was constrained at last to cry out, "Ah! I have consumed my life in a laborious doing of nothing!—I would give all my learning and honour for the plain integrity of John Urick!"

This John Urick was a religious poor man, who spent eight hours of the day in prayer, eight in labour, and but eight in meals, sleep, and other necessities.(6)

Grotius had devoted too much of his time to worldly company, secular business, and learned trifles; too little to the exercises of the closet. This is forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.

When Salmasius, who was one of the most consummate scholars of his time, drew to the close of his life, he exclaimed bitterly against himself. "Oh!" said he, "I have lost a world of time! time, the most precious thing in the world! whereof had I but one year more, it should be spent in David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles!"—"Oh! mind the world less, and God more!"

Dr. Johnson was a serious believer in Jesus Christ for many years. Mixing, however, too much with men of no religion, his mind was kept barren of spiritual consolation, and he was grievously haunted with the fear of death through his whole life. "The approach of death," said he to a friend, "is very dreadful. I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid. It is vain to look round and round for that help which cannot be had. Yet we hope and hope, and fancy that he who has lived to-day, may live to-morrow." To another friend he said, "He never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him."

(6) Alfred, king of England, who fought fifty-six battles with the Danes, many of which were gained by his own personal courage and great example, dedicated, with strict punctuality, eight hours every day to acts of devotion, eight hours to public affairs, and as many to sleep, study, and necessary refreshment.

On another occasion he declared in company at Oxford, "I am afraid I shall be one of those who shall be damned—sent to hell, and punished everlastinglly." When he however, actually approached dissolution, "all his fears were calmed and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith, and his trust in the merits and propitiation of Jesus Christ." He was full of resignation, strong in faith, joyful in hope of his own salvation, and anxious for the salvation of his friends. He particularly exhorted Sir Joshua Reynolds, on his dying bed, "to read the Bible, and to keep holy the sabbath-day."

Haller, a Swiss physician, the delight and ornament of his country, was a great philosopher, a profound politician, an agreeable poet, and more particularly famous for his skill in botany, anatomy, and physic. During his last sickness he was visited by Joseph, the late emperor of Germany. Upon his death-bed, owing, probably to the variety of his literary pursuits, the multiplicity of his engagements, and the honours heaped upon him by the world, he went through sore conflicts of spirit concerning his interest in the salvation of the Redeemer.—His mind was clouded, and his soul destitute of comfort. In his last moments, however, he expressed renewed confidence in God's mercy through Christ, and left the world in peace.

Sir John Mason, on his death-bed, said, "I have lived to see five princes, and have been privy-counsellor to four of them. I have seen the most remarkable things in foreign parts, and have been present at most, state transactions for thirty years together; and I have learnt this after so many years experience—That seriousness is the greatest wisdom, temperance the best physic, and a good conscience the best estate. And, were I to live again, I would change the court for a cloister, my privy-counsellor's bustle for a hermit's retirement, and the whole life I have lived

in the palace, for an hour's enjoyment of God in the chapel." (7)

Philip the Third, king of Spain, when he drew near the end of his days, expressed his deep regret for a careless and worldly life in the following emphatical words:—" Ah! how happy would it have been for me, had I spent these twenty-three years, that I have held my kingdom, in retirement!"

Mazarine, one of the greatest statesmen in Europe, cried out a little before his death, with astonishment and tears:—" Oh! my poor soul! what will become of thee? Whither wilt thou go! Were I to live again, I would be a capuchin, rather than a courtier."

George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, was the richest man, and one of the greatest wits in the court of Charles II; and yet such were his vices and extravagances, that before he died, he was reduced to

(7) James, earl of Marlborough, who was killed in a battle at sea, on the coast of Holland, A. D. 1665, having a kind of presentiment of his own death, wrote to Sir Hugh Pollard a letter, of which the following is an extract:—" I will not speak ought of the vanity of this world; your own age and experience will save that labour; but there is a certain thing that goeth up and down in the world, called religion, dressed and pretended fantastically, and to purposes bad enough, which yet, by such evil dealing, loseth not its being. Moreover, God in his infinite mercy hath given us his holy word, in which, as there are many things hard to be understood, so there is enough plain and easy, to quiet our minds, and direct us concerning our future being." I confess to God and you, I have been a great negleter, and, I fear, a despiser, of it—God, of his infinite mercy, pardon me the dreadful fault. But when I retired myself from the noise and deceitful vanity of the world, I found no comfort in any other resolution, than what I had from thence. I commend from the bottom of my heart the same to your happy use. Dear Sir Hugh, let us be more generous than to believe we die as the beasts that perish; but with the Christian, manly, brave resolution, look to what is eternal. I will not trouble you further. Shew this letter to my friends, and to whom you please. The only great God, and holy God, Father, Son, and holy Ghost, direct you to an happy end of your life, and send us a joyful resurrection. So prays your true friend,

MARLBOROUGH."

poverty and general contempt. In this situation, however, he seems to have been brought to a sense of his folly, and the danger of his condition, from the letter which he wrote to Dr. Barrow, of whom he had an high opinion, on his death-bed; and which is worthy the attention of every man of pleasure and dissipation.

“ DEAR DOCTOR,

I always looked upon you as a man of true virtue; and know you to be a person of sound judgment. For, however I may act in opposition to the principles of religion, or the dictates of reason, I can honestly assure you, I had always the highest veneration for both. The world and I may shake hands; for I dare affirm, we are heartily weary of each other. O what a prodigal have I been of the most valuable of all possessions, time! I have squandered it away, with a persuasion it was lasting; and now, when a few days would be worth a hecatomb of worlds, I cannot flatter myself with a prospect of half a dozen hours. How despicable is that man who never prays to God, but in the time of his distress! In what manner can he supplicate that omnipotent Being in his affliction, with reverence, whom in the tide of his prosperity, he never remembered with dread? Do not brand me with infidelity, when I tell you, I am almost ashamed to offer up my petitions to the throne of grace; or of imploring that divine mercy in the next world, which I have so scandalously abused in this. Shall ingratitude to man be looked on as the blackest of crimes, and not ingratitude to God? Shall an insult offered to the king be looked on in the most offensive light; and yet no notice taken when the King of kings is treated with indignity and disrespect? The companions of my former libertinism, would scarce believe their eyes, were you to shew them this epistle. They would laugh at me as a dreaming enthusiast, or pity me as a timorous wretch, who was shocked at the appearance of futurity. They are more entitled to my pity than my

resentment. A future state may very well strike terror into any man who has not acted well in this life: and he must have an uncommon share of courage indeed, who does not shrink at the presence of his God. You see the apprehensions of death, will soon bring the most profligate to a proper use of their understanding. I am haunted by remorse, despised by my acquaintance, and, I fear, forsaken by my God. There is nothing so dangerous, as extraordinary abilities. I cannot be accused of vanity now, by being sensible that I was once possessed of uncommon qualifications; as I sincerely regret that I ever was blest with any at all. My rank in life still made these accomplishments more conspicuous; and, fascinated with the general applause which they procured, I never considered about the proper means by which they should be displayed. Hence, to purchase a smile from a blockhead whom I despised, I have frequently treated the virtuous with disrespect; and sported with the holy name of heaven, to obtain a laugh from a parcel of fools, who were entitled to nothing but my contempt. Men of wit look on themselves as discharged from the duties of religion; and confine the doctrines of the gospel to people of meander understandings; and look on that man to be of a narrow genius who studies to be good. What a pity that the holy writings are not made the criterion of true judgment!—Favour me with a visit as soon as possible. Writing to you gives me some ease. I am of opinion this is the last visit I shall ever solicit from you. My distemper is powerful. Come and pray for the departing spirit of the unhappy

BUCKINGHAM."(8)

(8) This nobleman was a gay, capricious person, of some wit, and great vivacity. He was the minister of riot, and counsellor of infamous practices; the slave of intemperance, a pretended atheist, without honour or principle, economy or discretion. At last deserted by all his friends, and despised by all the world, he died in the greatest want and obscurity. It is of him that Pope says:

We have also an uncommon alarm given us in a letter from another nobleman on his death-bed, to an intimate companion; which no man can seriously read, and not be deeply affected.

" In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half hung,  
 With floor of plaster, and the walls of dung—  
 Great Villiers lies. Alas! how chang'd from him;  
 That life of pleasure, and that soul of whim!—  
 No wit to flatter left of all his store!  
 No fool to laugh at, which he valued more!  
 There, victor of his health, of fortune, friends,  
 And fame, this lord of useless thousands ends."

Dryden describes this nobleman as being,

" A man so various, that he seem'd to be  
 Not one, but all mankind's epitome :  
 Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong ;  
 Was every thing by starts, and nothing long ;  
 But, in the course of one revolving moon,  
 Was chymist, fidler, statesman, and buffoon :  
 Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking ;  
 Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking."

Dillon, earl of Roscommon, contemporary with Buckingham, was also a man of considerable learning and abilities, but a man of dissipation and licentious principles. He addicted himself immoderately to gaming, by which he was engaged in frequent quarrels and brought into no little distress. But, however we may be disposed to play the devil when we are in no apparent danger, there is a time coming, when we shall see all things in a more serious point of view. Accordingly, we are told, at the moment this merry nobleman expired, he was constrained to utter, with an energy of voice that expressed the most ardent devotion —

" My God, my Father, and my Friend,  
 Do not forsake me in the end."

Something like the case of Buckingham and Roscommon, likewise, was the last scene of Sheffield, duke of Buckingham, who died in the reign of George the First, if we may credit the lines inscribed by his own order on his monument :—

" Dubius, sed non improbus vixi.  
 Incertus morior, non perturbatus.  
 Humanum est nescire et errare.  
 Christum adveneror. Deo confido.  
 Ens entium, miserere mei."

Steel hath given us an affecting confession of a dying infidel in No. LXXXI. of the *Guardian*; and a humorous account of two other gentlemen in Nos. CXI. and CXXXV. of the *Tatler*.

## "DEAR SIR,

" Before you receiye this, my final state will be determined by the judge of all the earth. In a few days at most, perhaps in a few hours, the inevitable sentence will be past that shall raise me to the heights of happiness, or sink me to the depths of misery. While you read these lines, I shall be either groaning under the agonies of absolute despair, or triumphing in fulness of joy.

It is impossible for me to express the present disposition of my soul—the vast uncertainty I am struggling with! No words can paint the force and vivacity of my apprehensions. Every doubt wears the face of horror, and would perfectly overwhelm me, but for some faint beams of hope, which dart across the tremendous gloom! What tongue can utter the anguish of a soul suspended between the extremes of infinite joy, and eternal misery? I am throwing my last stake for eternity, and tremble and shudder for the important event.

Good God! how have I employed myself! what enchantment hath held me? In what delirium hath my life been past? What have I been doing, while the sun in its race, and the stars in their courses, have lent their beams, perhaps, only to light me to perdition!

I never awakened till now. I have but just commenced the dignity of a rational being. Till this instant I had a wrong apprehension of every thing in nature. I have pursued shadows, and entertained myself with dreams. I have been treasuring up dust, and sporting myself with the wind. I look back on my past life, and but for some memorials of guilt and infamy, it is all a blank—a perfect vacancy! I might have grazed with the beasts of the field, or sung with the winged inhabitants in the woods to much better purpose, than any for which I have lived. And oh! but for some faint hope, a thousand times more blessed had I been, to have slept with the clods of the valley, and never

heard the Almighty's fiat, nor waked into life at his command !

I never had a just apprehension of the solemnity of the part I am to act till now. I have often met death insulting on the hostile plain, and, with a stupid boast, defied his terrors ; with a courage as brutal as that of the warlike horse, I have rushed into the field of battle, laughed at the glittering spear, and rejoiced at the sound of the trumpet ; nor had a thought of any state beyond the grave, nor the great tribunal to which I must have been summoned ;

“ Where all my secret guilt had been reveal'd,  
Nor the minutest circumstance conceal'd.”

It is this which arms death with all its terrors ; else I could still mock at fear, and smile in the face of the gloomy monarch. It is not giving up my breath ; it is not being forever insensible, that is the thought at which I shrink : it is the terrible hereafter, the something beyond the grave at which I recoil. Those great realities, which, in the hours of mirth and vanity, I have treated as phantoms, as the idle dreams of superstitious beings ; these start forth, and dare me now in their most terrible demonstration. My awakened conscience feels something of that eternal vengeance I have often defied.

To what heights of madness is it possible for human nature to reach ? What extravagance is it to jest with death ! to laugh at damnation ! to sport with eternal chains, and recreate a jovial fancy with the scenes of infernal misery !

Were there no impiety in this kind of mirth, it would be as ill-bred as to entertain a dying friend with the sight of an harlequin, or the rehearsal of a farce. Every thing in nature seems to reproach this levity in human creatures. The whole creation, man excepted, is serious : man, who has the highest reason to be so, while he has affairs of infinite consequence depending on this short uncertain duration.

A condemned wretch may with as good a grace go dancing to his execution, as the greatest part of mankind go on with such a thoughtless gaiety to their grave.

Oh! with what horror do I recall those hours of vanity which we have wasted together! Return, ye lost neglected moments! How should I prize you above the Eastern treasures! Let me dwell with hermits; let me rest on the cold earth; let me converse in cottages; may I but once more stand a candidate for an immortal crown, and have my probation for celestial happiness.

Ye vain grandeurs of a court! Ye sounding titles, and perishing riches! what do ye now signify! what consolation, what relief can ye give me? I have a splendid passage to the grave; I die in state, and languish under a gilded canopy; I am expiring on soft and downy pillows, and am respectfully attended by my servants and physicians: my dependents sigh, my sisters weep, my father bends beneath a load of years and grief; my lovely wife, pale and silent, conceals her inward anguish; my friend, who was as my own soul, suppresses his sighs, and leaves me to his secret grief. But, oh! who of these will answer my summons at the high tribunal? Who of them will bail me from the arrest of death? Who will descend into the dark prison of the grave for me?

Here they all leave me, after having paid a few idle ceremonies to the breathless clay, which perhaps may lie reposed in state, while my soul, my only conscious part, may stand trembling before my judge.

My afflicted friends, it is very probable, with great solemnity, will lay the senseless corpse in a stately monument, inscribed with,

Here lies the Great—

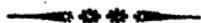
But could the pale carcase speak, it would soon reply:—

False marble, where?  
Nothing but poor and sordid dust lies here!

While some flattering panegyric is pronounced at my interment, I may perhaps be hearing my just condemnation at a superior tribunal; where an unerring verdict may sentence me to everlasting infamy. But I cast myself on his absolute mercy, through the infinite merits of the Redeemer of lost mankind. Adieu, till we meet in the world of spirits."

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Nothing is so well calculated to convince us of the vast importance of living wholly under the power of the gospel, as seeing great and valuable men dying in such a low and unworthy manner, as many of the first characters of our world have been known to do. The cases of Grotius and Salmasius, of Johnson and Haller, are mortifying instances. Great talents, great learning, great celebrity, are all utterly insufficient to constitute a man happy, and to give him peace and confidence in a dying hour. We know the promises of God are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus: but if the promises be sure, and strongly animating; to the proper objects of them, the threatenings of God are not less infallible, and at the same time are extremely alarming to the proper objects of them. Nothing within the compass of nature can enable a man, with the eyes of a mind properly enlightened, to face death without fear and dismay, but a strong conscious sense, founded on scriptural evidence, that our sins are pardoned, that God is reconciled, and that the Judge of the world is become our friend.



#### EXAMPLES OF PERSONS LIVING AND DYING EITHER WITH CONFIDENCE, OR IN THE FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."  
"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Addison was a very able and elegant advocate for the Bible, in life and death. Just before his departure,

having sent for a young nobleman nearly related to him, who requested to know his dying commands—his answer was—" See in what peace a Christian can die !"

He spake with difficulty, and soon expired.—Through grace divine, how great is man ! Through divine mercy, how stingless is death !

" He taught us how to live ; and, oh ! too high  
A price for knowledge, taught us how to die."

Leland, after spending a long and exemplary life in the service of the gospel, closed it with the following words :—" I give my dying testimony to the truth of christianity. The promises of the gospel are my support and consolation. They, alone, yield me satisfaction in a dying hour. I am not afraid to die. The gospel of Christ has raised me above the fear of death ; for I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Pascal was one of the most humble and devout believers in Jesus that ever lived. Bayle saith of his life, that " an hundred volumes of sermons are not worth so much as this single life, and are far less capable of disarming men of impiety. The extraordinary humility and devotion of Pascal gives a more sensible mortification to the libertines of the age, than if one was to let loose upon them a dozen missionaries. They can now no longer attack us with their favourite and darling objection, that there are none but little and narrow spirits, who profess themselves the votaries of piety and religion : for we can now tell them, and boldly tell them, that both the maxims and practice thereof, have been pushed to the strongest degree, and carried to the greatest height, by one of the profoundest geometers, by one of the most subtile metaphysicians, and by one of the most solid and penetrating genii, that ever yet existed on this earth" (9).

(9) " This great man, during some of the latter years of his life, spent his whole time in prayer, and reading the Holy Scriptures ; and in this he took incredible delight."

Olympia Fulvia Morata, was one of the earliest and brightest ornaments of the reformation. She could declaim in Latin, converse in Greek, and was a critic in the most difficult classics. But after it pleased God by his grace to open the eyes of her mind to discover the truth, she became enamoured of the Sacred Scriptures, above all other books in the world, and studied them by day and by night. And when dissolution approached, she declared she felt nothing but "an inexpressible tranquillity and peace with God through Christ."—Her mouth was full of the praises of God, and she emphatically expressed herself by saying—"I am nothing but joy."

Lord Russel delivered himself, just before his execution, in the strongest terms of faith and confidence. He said:—"Neither my imprisonment nor fear of death have been able to discompose me in any degree. On the contrary I have found the assurances of the love and mercy of God in and through my blessed Redeemer; in whom I only trust. And I do not question but I am going to partake of that fulness of joy, which is in his presence; the hopes of which do so wonderfully delight me, that I think this is the happiest time of my life, though others may look upon it as the saddest."

Charles the Fifth having alarmed and agitated all Europe nearly fifty years, retired from the world, and enjoyed more complete contentment in this situation than all his grandeur had ever yielded him. "I have tasted," said he, "more satisfaction in my solitude, in one day, than in all the triumphs of my former reign; and I find that the sincere study, profession, and practice of the Christian religion, hath in it such joys and sweetness as courts are strangers to."(10)

(10) Louis, one of the late dukes of Orleans, expressed the delight he found in piety and devotion in the following terms; "I know by experience, that sublunary grandeur and sublunary pleasure, are deceitful and vain, and are always infinitely below the

Oxenstiern, chancellor of Sweden, was one of the most able and learned men of his time, and yet he was not too great and too wise to be above being taught by the Sacred Writings. "After all my troubles and toilings in the world," says he, "I find that my private life in the country has afforded me more contentment, than ever I met with in all my public employments. I have lately applied myself to the study of the Bible, wherein all wisdom, and the greatest delights are to be found. I therefore counsel you to make the study and practice of the word of God your chief delight; as indeed it will be to every soul that savours the truths of God, which infinitely excel all worldly things."

Selden, the lawyer, whom Grotius calls "the glory of the English nation," was, as Hale declared, "a resolved serious Christian, and a great adversary to Hobbes's errors." He was one of the most eminent philosophers, and most learned men of his time. He had taken a diligent survey of all kinds of learning, and had read as much, perhaps, as any man ever did; and yet, towards the latter end of his days, he declared to Usher, that notwithstanding he had been so laborious in his inquiries, and curious in his collec-

tions we form of them. But, on the contrary, such happiness and such complacency may be found in devotion and piety, as the sensual mind has no idea of."

Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, was also eminent for his piety towards God, and has been known to spend hours together in religious retirement. So too Alfred.

George II. during war time, would constantly be in his closet between five and six o'clock in the morning, winter and summer, praying for the success of his fleets and armies.

A remarkable instance of attention to the blessing of the Divine Being we have also in the conduct of lord Duncan. Previous to the action on the coast of Holland, during the awful moments of preparation, he called all his officers upon deck, and in their presence prostrated himself in prayer, before the God of hosts, committing himself and them, with the cause they maintained, to his sovereign protection, his family to his care, his soul and body to the disposal of his providence; then, rising from his knees, he gave command to make the attack.

tions, and had possessed himself of a treasure of books and manuscripts upon all ancient subjects ; yet " he could rest his soul on none, save the Scriptures." (1)

Claude was a very considerable man among the protestants, who were driven from France by Lewis the fourteenth. When he was taken ill he sent for the senior pastor of the church, to whom, in the presence of all his family, he expressed himself thus :— " Sir, I was desirous to see you, and to make my dying declaration before you. I am a miserable sinner before God. I most heartily beseech him to shew me mercy, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope he will hear my prayer. He has promised to hear the cries of repenting sinners. I adore him for blessing my ministry. It has not been fruitless, in his church ; it is an effect of God's grace, and I adore his providence for it."

After pausing a while, he added, " I have carefully examined all religions. None appear to me worthy of the wisdom of God, and capable of leading man to happiness, but the Christian religion. I have diligently studied popery and the reformation. The protestant religion, I think, is the only good religion. It is all found in the Holy Scriptures, the word of God. From this, as from a fountain, all religions must be drawn. Scripture is the root, the protestant religion is the trunk and branches of the tree. It becomes you all to keep steady to it."

About a week before he died, with true patriarchal dignity, he sat up in his bed, and asked to speak with his son and family. " Son," said he, tenderly embracing him, " I am leaving you. The time of my departure is at hand." Silence, and sobs, and floods of tears flowed, each clasped in the others arms. The

(1) This is equally true of that great philosophic soul, Marsilius Ficinus, who was as learned a man as Italy ever produced. After he had read all good authors, he rested in the Bible as the only book.

family all came, and asked his blessing. "Most willingly," replied he, "will I give it you." Mrs. Claude kneeled down by the bed-side. "My wife," said he, "I have always tenderly loved you. Be not afflicted at my death. The death of the saints is precious in the sight of God.—In you I have seen a sincere piety. I bless God for it. Be constant in serving him with your whole heart. He will bless you. I recommend my son and his family to you, and I beseech the Lord to bless you." To his son, who, with an old servant was kneeling by his mother, he said, among other things, "son, you have chosen the good part. Perform your office as a good pastor, and God will bless you. Love and respect your mother. Be mindful of this domestic. Take care she wants nothing as long as she lives. I give you all my blessing." He afterwards said, at several times, "I am so oppressed, that I can only attend to two of the great truths of religion, the mercy of God, and the gracious aid of his holy Spirit.—I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.—My whole recourse is to the mercy of God. I expect a better life than this.—Our Lord Jesus Christ is my only righteousness."

Thus died the venerable Claude, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, A. D. 1687.

The Rev. Samuel Walker was a minister of no ordinary rank in the church of Christ. His excessive labours speedily ruined his constitution, and he died at the age of forty-eight. When his dissolution drew near, after much former darkness, but the most assured confidence in God, he broke out to his nurse in this rapturous expression:—"I have been upon the wings of the cherubim! Heaven has in a manner been opened to me! I shall soon be there!"—Next day to a friend who came to see him he said, with a joy in his countenance more than words can utter:—"O had I strength to speak, I could tell you such news

— would rejoice your very soul! I have had such views of heaven! But I am not able to say more."

Hervey was an excellent scholar, and a believer in the Bible, with its most distinguishing truths. When he apprehended himself to be near the close of life, and stood, as it were, on the brink of the grave, with eternity full in view, he wrote to a friend at a distance to tell him what were his sentiments in that awful situation. "I have been too fond," said he, "of reading every thing valuable and elegant that has been penned in our language, and been peculiarly charmed with the historians, orators, and poets of antiquity: but were I to renew my studies, I would take leave of those accomplished trifles; I would resign the delights of modern wits, amusement, and eloquence, and devote my attention to the Scripture of Truth. I would sit with much greater assiduity at my divine Master's feet, and desire to know nothing in comparison of Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

After this, when his dissolution drew still nearer, he said to them about him:—" How thankful am I for death! It is the passage to the Lord and Giver of eternal life.—O welcome, welcome, welcome death! thou mayest well be reckoned among the treasures of the Christian! To live is Christ, but to die is gain! Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy most holy and comfortable word; for mine eyes have seen thy precious salvation."

Leechman, late principal of the college of Glasgow, at the close of his life, thus addressed the son of a worthy nobleman, who was designed for the church, and the early part of whose education had been much under the doctor's eye:

" You see the situation I am in: I have not many days to live: I am glad you have had an opportunity of witnessing the tranquillity of my last moments. But it is not tranquillity and composure alone, it is joy and triumph; it is complete exultation."—His features

kindled, his voice rose as he spoke. "And whence," says he, "does this exultation spring?—From that book, pointing to a Bible that lay on the table—from that book, too much neglected indeed, but which contains invaluable treasures! treasures of joy and rejoicing! for it makes us certain that this mortal shall put on immortality."

Romaine was a zealous and successful preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and adorned it by a suitable character, above fifty years. In his last illness not one fretful or murmuring word ever escaped his lips. "I have," said he, "the peace of God in my conscience, and the love of God in my heart. I knew before the doctrines I preached to be truths, but now I experience them to be blessings. Jesus is more precious than rubies, and all that can be desired on the earth, is not to be compared to him." He was in full possession of his mental powers to the last moment, and near his dissolution cried out, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! Glory be to thee on high, for such peace on earth, and good will to men."

These are glorious instances of the power of religion upon the mind, in the most trying circumstances of nature. I know it is fashionable for lukewarm and pharisaical Christians, who have a form of godliness, but deny the power, and for *philosophisters* of every description, to treat all such death-bed scenes as delusive and fanatical. I am not, however, ashamed to say, that dissolutions of the above description, appear to me honourable to religion, and desirable above all enjoyments of the world. If this be enthusiasm, may I be the greatest enthusiast that ever existed. Such enthusiasts, thanks be to God, have appeared, more or less, in every age of the gospel-dispensation. They are increasing now in a considerable degree, and they shall abound more and more, maugre all the opposition of infidelity, and the cool moral harangues of a secular and lukewarm clergy. Large numbers of examples might be produced, of a similar kind, from

those who lived before the rise both of methodism and puritanism, besides these we have mentioned; but the only one I shall introduce here, by way of contrast to the death-bed scenes of Chesterfield, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the other unhappy characters we have recorded, shall be that of the learned and excellent Bedell, the scourge of ecclesiastical corruption, a pattern for prelates and clergymen, and the glory of the Irish hierarchy.—After a life spent in the most laborious service of his Divine Master, when he apprehended his great change to draw near, he called for his sons, and his sons' wives, and spake to them, at several times, as he was able, the following words:

—“ I am going the way of all flesh: I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. Knowing, therefore, that shortly I must put off this tabernacle; even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me, I know also that if this my earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, I have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, a fair mansion in the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God.—Therefore, to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain; which increaseth my desire even now to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better than to continue here in all the transitory, vain, and false pleasures of this world, of which I have seen an end.

—Hearken, therefore, unto the last words of your dying father. I am no more in this world, but ye are in the world. I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God, through the all-sufficient merits of jesus Christ my Redeemer; who ever lives to make intercession for me; who is a propitiation for all my sins, and washed me from them all in his own blood; who is worthy to receive glory and honour, and power; who hath created all things, and for whose pleasure they are and were created.—My witness is in heaven, and my record on high, that I have endeavoured to glorify God on earth: and

in the ministry of the gospel of his dear Son, which was committed to my trust, I have finished the work which he gave me to do, as a faithful ambassador of Christ, and steward of the mysteries of God, I have preached righteousness in the great congregation, lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord! thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation of mankind. He is near that justifieth me, that I have not concealed the words of the Holy One; but that the words that he gave me, I have given to you, and ye have received them.—I had a desire and resolution to walk before God in every stage of my pilgrimage, from my youth up to this day, in truth, and with an upright heart, and to do that which was upright in his eyes, to the utmost of my power; and what things were gain to me formerly, these things I now count loss, for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things; and I account them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. I press, therefore, towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—Let nothing separate you from the love of Christ, neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword; though, as we hear and see, for his sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter; yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us: for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor

things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus, my Lord. Therefore, love not the world, nor the things of the world; but prepare daily and hourly for death that now besieges us on every side, and be faithful unto death, that we may meet together joyfully on the right hand of Christ at the last day, and follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth; with all those that are clothed in white robes, in sign of innocence, and palms in their hands, in sign of victory; who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They shall hunger no more, nor thirst, neither shall the sun light on them; nor any heat; for the Lamb, that is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.—Choose rather, with Moses to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; which will be bitterness in the latter end. Look, therefore, for the sufferings, and be made partakers of the sufferings of Christ; to fill up that which is behind of the affliction of Christ in your flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church. What can you look for, but one woe after another, while the man of sin is thus suffered to rage, and to make havoc of God's people at his pleasure, while men are divided about trifles, that ought to have been more vigilant over us, and careful of those, whose blood is precious in God's sight, though now shed every where like water. If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled; and be ye in nothing terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For to you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake. Rejoice, therefore, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when

his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. And if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; the Spirit of glory, and of Christ resteth on you; on their part he is evil spoken of, on your part he is glorified.—God will surely visit you in due time, and turn your captivity as the rivers of the south, and bring you back again into your possession in this land: though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; yet ye shall reap in joy, though now you sow in tears: all our losses shall be recompensed with abundant advantages; for my God will supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus, who is able to do exceeding abundantly for us, above all that we are able to ask or think."

After that, he blessed his children and those that stood about him, in an audible voice, in these words: "God of his infinite mercy bless you all, and present you holy, and unblamable, and irreprovable in his sight, that ye may meet together at the right hand of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, amen. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course of my ministry and life together. Though grievous wolves have entered in among us, not sparing the flock; yet I trust the great Shepherd of the flock will save and deliver them out of all places, where they have been scattered in this cloudy and dark day: and they shall be no more a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. O Lord, I have waited for thy salvation. I have kept the faith once given to the saints; for I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

After this, the good bishop spake little more. His sickness increased, his speech failed, and he slumbered

the remainder of his time away, till his discharge came.

Let incredulity itself say, if this was not an admirable close of a laborious and useful life.

One may defy all the sons of infidelity to shew us an example among their brethren, of a life so useful, and a death so great, so noble, so glorious as this of the good bishop.(2)

These are all matters of fact. Most of the persons mentioned were of the first reputation in their respective spheres of action. It would be prudent to review the whole; to compare the several instances; and weigh thoroughly the issue: for though it is not our province to determine the final fates of men, we may, from such comparison, see clearly whose situation is most eligible at the close of life, and whose case stands fairest for future felicity. Extremely weak, therefore, would it be, to let any man sneer us out of our Bible, our Redeemer, and our salvation. Did we ever know a person lament, when he came to die, that he had taken too much pains to serve his Creator, and save his soul alive? Did we ever hear of a deist, who gloried, in his departing moments, that he had been favoured with success in making converts to the principles of infidelity? Or did we ever see a sound scholar, who was at the same time, a chaste, temperate, moral, and conscientious man, that lived and died an unbeliever.(3) Instances of a contrary nature we

(2) Be it observed what use this admirable man makes of the Sacred Writings.

“They know not —  
That Scripture is the only cure of woe :  
That field of promise, how it flings abroad  
Its odour o'er the Christian's thorny road ;  
The soul, reposing on assur'd relief,  
Feels herself happy amidst all her grief,  
Forgets her labour as she toils along,  
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song.”

(3) Bolingbroke was a man of considerable talents; he lived and died an infidel. But he was a libertine, and much addicted to

have known many, but rarely one which comes up to this description. Persons of an affected liberality of mind, indeed are frequently found, who hector, domineer, and speak great swelling words of vanity, while health and prosperity smile upon them ; but they generally lose their courage, and appear to infinite disadvantage, when death and judgment stare them in the face. If their souls be not harrowed up with horror, as in the cases of Voltaire, Newport, Altamont, and others ; at best they are sullen, gloomy, disconsolate, like Hobbes and Chesterfield ; or, hav-

women and wine, we therefore wonder not that he rejected christianity, notwithstanding the high compliments which he thought proper to pay it.

Temple too was "a person of true judgment in civil affairs, and very good principles with relation to government ; but in nothing else. He was a vain man, much blown up in his own conceit, which he shewed too indecently on all occasions. He seemed to think that things were as they are from all eternity ; at least he thought religion was fit only for the mob. He was a great admirer of the sect of Confucius in China, who were atheists themselves, or left religion to the rabble. He was a corrupter of all that came near him, and delivered himself up wholly to study, ease, and pleasure."

Shaftsbury was "a man of various talents, but a deist, at best, in his religion. He had the dotage of astrology in him to a high degree.—He fancied, that after death our souls lived in stars. He had a general knowledge of the slighter parts of learning, but understood little to the bottom : so he triumphed in a rambling way of talking, but argued slightly when he was held close to any point. He had a wonderful faculty at opposing, and running things down ; but had not the like force in building them up. He had such an extravagant vanity in setting himself out, that it was very disagreeable."

Saville, marquis of Halifax, was "a man of great and ready wit ; full of life, and very pleasant ; much turned to satire. He let his wit run much on matters of religion : so that he passed for a bold and determined atheist, though he often protested he was not one. He confessed he could not swallow every thing that divines imposed on the world. He was a Christian by submission ; he believed as much as he could.—In a fit of sickness, I knew him very much touched with a sense of religion. I was then often with him. He seemed full of good purposes ; but they went off with his sickness."

This is a specimen of the general characters of those who reject the gospel of Christ.

ing their consciences seared as with an hot iron, they are insensible to the vast realities of the invisible world, brave it out, and sport blindfold on the brink of destruction, after the manner of Servin, Hume, Emerson, and several of the late French philosophers. But surely a conduct of this kind is highly unbecoming men of wisdom, even upon their own supposition, that death is an eternal sleep. Is annihilation so small a matter, that a man can look upon it with complacency? Hume's conduct was infinitely unnatural. It was the effect of pride and sophistical philosophy. "He had a vanity in being thought easy," as Johnson observes,

"That must be our cure,  
To be no more. Sad cure! For who would lose  
This intellectual being,  
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,  
To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost  
In the wide womb of uncreated night,  
Devoid of sense and motion?"

It will be the concern of every wise man, therefore, to take warning in time, to be cautious how he gives credit to the representations of unbelievers, and consider well what the end of our present state of trial will be. It is an easy business to revile and stigmatize the Bible. Few things more so. Any smatterer in learning, who hath got a wicked heart, a witty head, and a comfortable flow of scurrilous language, is competent to the task. Examples of this kind we meet with in every neighbourhood. Profound scholars, however, and modest men, have always been incapable of such conduct. What lord Bacon saith of atheism is equally true of deism: "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." (4)

(4) Bacon was a serious believer in the gospel of Christ, and hath given ~~in~~ his creed — In a prayer which he wrote upon a certain occasion, he addresses the Almighty by saying — “ Thy creatures have been my books, but thy Scriptures much more. I have sought thee in the courts, fields, and gardens; but I have found thee in thy temples.”

Our great moral poet too, will teach us the same lesson :

“ A little learning is a dangerous thing;  
Drink deep, or taste not the Piërian spring :  
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,  
But drinking largely sobers us again.”(5)

What then if Paine, who is both illiterate and immoral, insolent and satirical, ill qualified for the discovery of moral and religious truth, which consists in purity, modesty, humility, sobriety, and goodness, though otherwise a man of good natural understanding, is an unbeliever in the divine mission of the Son of God? It may be some consolation to remember, that the first characters, who ever adorned our world, in every department of human life, have not been ashamed of the gospel of Christ.—Every man would do well to consider, in these days of abounding licentiousness, by way of supporting the mind against the ridicule of professed deists, that the divines, Butler, and Bentley, and Barrow, and Berkeley, and Cudworth, and Clarke, and Sherlock, and Doddridge, and Lardner, and Pearson, and Taylor, and Usher, and Watts, and a thousand more, were believers: that the poets, Spencer, and Waller, and Cowley, and Prior, and Thomson, and Gray, and Young,

Steel gives us a fine character of this extraordinary person:—  
“ He was a man who for greatness of genius, and compass of knowledge, did honour to his age and country; one might almost say, to human nature itself. He possessed at once all those extraordinary talents which were divided amongst the greatest authors of antiquity. He had the sound, distinct, comprehensive knowledge of Aristotle, with all the beautiful lights, graces and embellishments of Cicero. One does not know which to admire most in his writings, the strength of reason, force of style, or brightness of imagination.”

(5) “ The Christian religion has nothing to apprehend from the strictest investigation of the most learned of its adversaries; it suffers only from the misconceptions of sciolists, and silly pretenders to superior wisdom. A little learning is far more dangerous to the faith of those who possess it, than ignorance itself.”

and Milton, and Cowper, were believers: that the statesmen, Hyde, and Somers, and Cullen, and Pulteney, and Howard, and Harrington, and King, and Barrington, and Lyttleton, with numberless more, (6) were believers: that the moralists, Steel, and Addison, and Hawkesworth, and Johnson, were believers: that the physicians, Arbuthnot, and Cheyne, and Browne, and Boerhaave, and Pringle, and Hartley, and Haller, and Mead, and Fothergill, were believers: that the lawyers, Hale, and Melmoth, and Forbes, and Hailes, and Pratt, and Blackstone, and Jones, (7) were believers; that the philosophers, Pascal, and Grotius, and Ray, and Cotes, and Ferguson, and Adams, and Locke, and Euler, and Newton, were believers. (8) Where is the great misfortune, then, to the interests of religion, if lukewarm Christians, of every persuasion, betray the cause they pretend to espouse; and if unbelievers of every description imagine a vain thing against the Redeemer of mankind, and the book which he hath caused to be written for our instruction. Nothing less than demonstration on the side of infidelity, should induce any man to resist the momentum that these venerable names give in favour of the gospel. Many of them,

(6) Washington was one of the first of Warriors, the first of politicians, and the worthiest of men. He was the delight of an admiring and astonished world; and yet—hear it, O ye minute philosophers of degenerate Europe—he was a serious Christian!

(7) It is a pleasure to hear such men as Erskine, the first orator of the age, come boldly forward in favour of the gospel of Jesus. "No man ever existed, who is more alive to every thing connected with the Christian faith, than I am, or more unalterably impressed with its truths."

(8) We are well aware that the truth of christianity cannot be established by authority. But if its truth cannot be so established, neither can its falsehood. Indeed no man can be a competent judge, either of the truth or falsehood of the gospel, who has not turned his attention to it for a considerable time with all seriousness of mind, and with a considerable share of literary information. We may experience its saving power, but we are ill qualified to defend its eracity.

were the ornaments of human nature, whether we consider the wide range of their abilities, the great extent of their learning and knowledge, or the piety, integrity, and beneficence of their lives. These eminent characters, Bacon, Newton, Locke, Boyle, Ditton, Addison, Hartley, Littleton, Woodward, Pringle, Haller, Jones, Boerhaave, Milton, Grotius, Barrington, and Euler,(9) in particular, firmly adhered to the belief of Christianity, after the most diligent and strict researches into the life of its founder, the authenticity of its records, the completion of the prophecies, the sublimity of its doctrines, the purity of its precepts, and the arguments of its adversaries. Here was no priest-craft. These were all men of independent principles, and the most liberal and enlarged minds. They investigated the pretensions of the gospel to the bottom; they were not only satisfied with the justice of its claims, but they gloried in it as a most benevolent and godlike scheme ;(30) and they all endeavoured, if not by their oral discourses, yet by their immortal

(9) It is said of this great Christian philosopher, that few men of letters have written so much as he. His memory shall endure, till science herself is no more. No geometrician has ever embraced so many objects at one time, or has equalled him either in the variety or magnitude of his discoveries. He had read all the Latin classics, could repeat the whole *Aeneis* of Virgil by heart; was perfect master of ancient mathematical literature; had the history of all ages and nations, even to the minutest facts, ever present to his mind; was acquainted with physic, botany, and chemistry; was possessed of every qualification that could render a man estimable. Yet this man, accomplished as he was, was filled with respect for religion. His piety was sincere, and his devotion full of fervour. He went through all his Christian duties with the greatest attention. He loved all mankind, and if ever he felt a motion of indignation, it was against the enemy of religion, particularly against the declared apostles of infidelity. Against the objections of these men, he defended revelation, in a work published at Berlin in 1747.

(30) Dr. Alexander was favoured with a religious education, and brought up with a view to the church. By mixing with the world as he advanced in life, he lost his religious impressions. At this time he began to read the writings of Jebb, Lindsey,

writings, to recommend it to the general reception of mankind. It was their study in life, their solace in death.

Why then are so many of our fellow-creatures found to oppose, with such malignant virulence, what these great men have so successfully laboured to establish? The reason, in most cases, is obvious. They will not have this man to reign over them, because he is not to their taste. They oppose the Bible because it condemns their practice. For if Jesus be indeed the only Saviour of mankind, and if the declarations of Scripture be at all to be regarded, their situation is desperate, and they cannot escape the condemnation which is therein denounced against all such characters. Other reasons, however, may be given for such a preposterous conduct. Abundance of men are so neglected at first in their religious education, and when grown up to maturity are so immersed in the pleasures and pursuits of life, that they never give themselves leisure to examine into the foundation of religion. They are inattentive to it, as if it was none of their concern. This seems to have been the case with Halley. For when he was once throwing out some indecent reflections against christianity, Newton stopt him short, and addressed him in these words, which

and Priestley, and became a confirmed Socinian. In this state of mind he met with the writings of Helvetius and Voltaire. He read them with avidity, and it was not long before he commenced deist. In this state of mind he continued for some years, applauding his own superior discernment, and triumphing in his boasted freedom from the shackles of the-gospel. Neckar's book on the Importance of Religious Opinions, however, falling accidentally into his hands, the fame of the author induced him to read it. Here his infidelity received a shock; his mind underwent another change; and he was partly brought back to religion. Some months after this again, Paley's Evidences of Christianity were recommended to him. He bought the book. He read it eagerly twice over in little time with great care. He was convinced—and is now a zealous and happy Christian.

imply that this great astronomer had employed his life in studying only the book of nature:—"Dr. Halley, I am always glad to hear you, when you speak about astronomy, or other parts of the mathematics, because that is a subject you have studied, and well understand; but you should not talk of christianity, for you have not studied it: I have; and am certain you know nothing of the matter."

Many other persons, possessed of some discernment, observe the hypocrisy of several of the greatest pretenders to religion: they see them no better, and scarce even so good as some, who make less pretensions; and this becomes an insuperable offence to them. If these discerning men, however, would attend more to their own conduct, and less to the misconduct of others, it would be much happier for them, and more to their honour. Can any thing be more unreasonable, than that the gospel should be made answerable for all the weaknesses, vices and follies of its advocates? Will philosophy endure to be tried by this test? The fact is, truth is a stubborn thing, and does not fluctuate with the varying whims and opinions of men. Every person must give an account of himself unto God. Hypocrites have no encouragement from the Bible. Why should any man, therefore, make their hypocrisy an objection to that Bible? Let the blame fall where it belongs. The fate of such persons is fixed by the Judge of the world himself. Their false pretensions are utterly disclaimed by him. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works; but then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, all ye that work iniquity.

The weakness, folly, and enthusiasm, the noise and nonsense of the zealots(1) among all denominations of Christians, is another cause of the infidelity of the age. Unbelievers see the absurdity of their pretensions and proceedings, and they are undistinguishing and illiberal enough, to comprehend them, and the pure gospel of Christ, in one general sentence of reprobation. Such a conduct is surely uncandid, and highly unbecoming the character of men who would be thought lovers of wisdom. Where we see integrity and good intention at the bottom, we should make all requisite allowance for the infirmities of men. The best and wisest are encompassed with darkness, and know but in part. One grain of piety and moral excellence, is of more worth than the highest attain-

(1) The extravagances of some of the German Anabaptists, the French Prophets, the English Quakers, Puritans, and Methodists, have given great and just offence to many sensible and well-disposed people, and have been instrumental in driving no small number into downright indifference to all religion; while others have contracted the most inveterate principles of infidelity. But shall the follies of a few mistaken individuals, subvert the nature of things, and the laws of everlasting truth? Because some men are weak, silly, enthusiastic, and inflamed with spiritual pride, shall we take upon us to say, there is no such thing as sound religion and good sense in the world? This would be to make ourselves as weak and culpable as those whom we condemn.—All revivals of religion have been attended with excesses; all sects and parties have had, and will have among them, men of warm imaginations and feeble intellects; and wherever persons of this description become strongly impressed with the importance of religious truth, they seldom fail to disgrace the party to which they belong. There is no remedy for such unfortunate cases, but to use our best endeavours to restrain and keep them within the bounds of moderation. This however is usually extremely difficult; for all such persons are most commonly wiser than ten men that can render a reason. They are blown up with self-importance consider themselves as the peculiar favourites of heaven, and under the immediate teachings and leadings of the Divine Spirit. While this persuasion continues, they treat the direction of Scripture as a dead letter, and in vain do you attempt to reduce them to order, and the sober dictates of reason and common sense.

ments in the arts and sciences, without those moral and religious qualifications.

Others again take offence at the absurd doctrines of the several religious establishments (2) in Christendom. They discover in them certain peculiarities which they conceive to be irrational. They confound the doctrines of these human institutions, which were formed in the very dawn of the reformation, while men's eyes were yet scarcely open enough to discover truth, with genuine christianity. Not being at the pains to examine matters to the bottom, and distinguish accurately, they suppose them to be alike, and hence contract a rooted indifference, if not an unconquerable aversion, to all religion.

Some there are again, who, seeing the pomp and pride of many of our bishops and dignified clergy, how they, in direct opposition to the whole spirit of the gospel, as well as their own holy profession, scramble for emolument, and heap together from two to half a score lucrative places of preferment, while several thousands of their brethren are destitute of the ordinary comforts of life, without further examination, naturally suppose that religion is all priest-craft and self-interest, honour and conscience having nothing to do in the business.

It is well known that there are about 18,000 clergymen in England and Wales, of the established religion, and nearly 10,000 parishes. The rectories are 5,098; the vicarages 3,687; the livings of other descriptions 2,970; in all 11,755.

Twenty or thirty of those livings may be a thousand a year and upwards: four or five hundred of them 500 pounds a year and upwards: two thousand of them 200 pounds a year and upwards: five thousand of them under one hundred pounds a year. The average

(2) "It is the corruption of establishments, ten thousand times worse than the rudest dominion of *tyranny*, which has changed, and is changing, the face of the modern world."

value of livings is about 140 pounds a year, reckoning them at 10,000.

In the year 1714, when queen Ann's bounty began to be distributed, there were,

1071	livings not more than 10 pounds a year.
1467	20
1126	30
1149	40
884	50

In all 5627 livings not more than 50 pounds a year a piece.

All the 10 and 20 pounds livings have now been augmented by the above donation.

This bounty is about 13,000 pounds a year, clear of deductions, and is, therefore, equal to 65 augmentations annually at 200 pounds a piece.(3)

The whole income of the church and two universities is about 1,500,000 pounds a year. There are 26 bishops, whose annual income is 72,000, or according to another account 92,000 pounds; each bishop, therefore, has on an average 2,770 or 3,538 pounds a year, supposing he had no other preferment.—There are 28 deaneries and chapters, whose income is about 5,000 pounds a year each, making together about 140,000 pounds.—The income of the two universities is together about 180,000 pounds a year. The 10,000 clergy(4) have together about 1,108,000

(3) The clergy are indebted to bishop Burnet for this application. The money itself arises from the first fruits and tenths of church-livings, above a certain value, which, before the time of Henry the 8th, used to go to the Pope of Rome.

(4) The dissenters in England and Wales make about a fifth part of the nation, consisting of near 1400 congregations. The Quakers are numerous, being about 50,000, but the Baptists are more numerous than either the Quakers, or the Presbyterians, or Moravians.

To these should be added the Methodist preachers of the gospel. The number of travelling preachers among the Methodists of Europe, at the last conference, was 558—the local preachers

pounds a year among them, which is little more than 100 pounds a piece. The whole body of the clergy and their families make near 100,000 souls, that is, about an eightieth part of the nation. And reckoning the population of England and Wales at eight millions of people, every clergyman would have a congregation of 444 persons to attend to, in the same way of calculation.

There are 28 cathedrals, 26 deans, 60 arch-deacons, and 544 prebends, canons, &c.—Besides these,

amounted to 2000. In the United States there are 571 Methodist travelling ministers—and about 2000 local preachers. The members under the direction of the British conference, including Ireland and the West Indies, amount to 134,576—and in the United States, the last returns (1808) made the whole Society to consist of 144,590 professing Christians.

The followers of George Whitefield and Lady Huntingdon, consist of nearly an equal number, in Great Britain.

What a highly respectable compliment do the "blind mouths" of this world pay the Methodists, in calling every man by that name whose conduct is moral, whose piety is fervent, and whose affections are set upon the things that are above!—Good men in all ages have been what the foolish world now call Methodists.

Aitken, in his Tour through North Wales, has paid that body of people a very high compliment. Paley says, "after men became Christians, much of their time was spent in prayer and devotion, in religious meetings, in celebrating the eucharist, in conferences, in exhortations, in preaching, in an affectionate intercourse with one another, and correspondence with other societies. Perhaps their mode of life, in its form and habit, was not very unlike the *Unitas Fratrum*, or that of the modern Methodists."

Cecil has given a fair account of this body of people, which is every where spoken against, and has honestly and ably defended them from the obloquy, which is usually cast upon all seriously religious characters by the world. The single circumstance, of their being generally reviled and abused by other denominations of professing Christians, is a certain sign, that there is something peculiarly good and excellent among them. The criterion, whereby to judge, which our Saviour has given us is, " If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

there are in all about 300 in orders belonging to the different cathedrals, and about 800 lay-officers, such as singing men, organists, &c. who are all paid from the cathedral emoluments; so that there are about 1700 persons attached to the several cathedrals, who divide among them the 140,000 pounds a year, making upon an average near 83 pounds per year a piece.

The whole income of the Kirk of Scotland, was, in 1755, about 68,500 pounds a year. This was divided among 944 ministers, and on an average made 72 pounds a piece, per annum.

When it is considered, that all the bishoprics, prebendaries, deaneries, headships of colleges, and best church-livings, are occupied by a smaller number, in all probability, than an eighteenth part of those clergy, in what a deplorable situation must a large share of the remaining seventeen thousand ministers be? And these church dignitaries, who are in possession of several thousands a year, per man, have made laws, directly contrary to the practice of Paul, that the inferior clergy, who are destitute of all the elegancies, and many of the comforts of life, shall not be permitted to follow any other calling, whereby to improve their condition, and get bread for their families! Would there be any thing inconsistent with the character of a minister of the gospel of Christ, if the poor rectors, vicars, and curates of the country, should make a common cause, and associate together in one body against their unfeeling oppressors? (5) Could there be any impro-

(5) Every man is an oppressor who holds that which ought to be in the hands of another.—It does not appear to me, that we can justly blame any man for being a deist, while the great body of us, the bishops and clergy, conduct ourselves in the manner we usually do. The spirit of our hierarchy is in direct opposition to the spirit of the gospel. A conscientious deist, if such can be found, who worships God in spirit and in truth is infinitely preferable to a proud, haughty, pompous bishop, or dignified clergyman, who trades in livings and souls; and will be damned with a damnation far less severe. Bishops and clergymen of this descrip-

priety in their conduct, if they should peaceably and respectfully address the king, who is head of the church, or the legislature of the land, to take their circumstances into serious consideration? One man—not a doit better than his brethren—shall enjoy 20,000 pounds a year—another 15,000—another 10,000—another 5000—another 3000—another 2000—and another 1000.—One shall heap living upon living, preferment upon preferment—to a vast amount—merely because he has got access—too often by mean compliances—to some great man—while his more worthy brother is almost in want of bread for his children. Law, bishop of Carlisle, possessed at the time

tion, profess what they will, are infidels at bottom. They believe nothing of the spirit of christianity. Religion is their trade, and gain with them is godliness. They live in the spirit of the ancient Scribes and Pharisees, and they may expect to share in the fate of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Mr. Osterval, attributes the corruption of the people chiefly to the clergy.—“The cause of the corruption of Christians is chiefly to be found in the clergy. I do not mean to speak here of all churchmen indifferently. We must do right to some, who distinguish themselves by their talents, their zeal, and the holiness of their lives. But the number of these is not considerable enough to stop the course of these disorders, which are occasioned in the church by the vast multitudes of remiss and corrupt pastors. These pull down, what the others endeavour to build up.”

The instances of extreme blame which attaches to the higher orders of the English clergy are very numerous. A certain gentleman, not an hundred miles from my own neighbourhood, is possessed of about a thousand a year private fortune. He is a married man, but without children. He has one living in Cheshire, of the value of more than 400 pounds a year; another in Essex, and another elsewhere, the three together making a thousand a year, more or less. He is moreover, chaplain to a company, and private tutor in a nobleman’s family. But what is most culpable, he resides upon none of his livings, and very seldom comes near them. Can that church be faultless, which permits such horrible abuses? The bishops themselves, however, being generally guilty of holding a variety of preferments, and of most inexcusable non-residence, are disposed to connive at every thing of the kind among the superior clergy who are under their inspection.

of his decease, ten or more different preferments. He was *bishop—head of a college—prebend—rector—librarian, &c. &c. &c.* and all this bestowed upon him—not because he was a more holy, useful and laborious man than ordinary; though a man of merit and talents; but because he wriggled himself into favour with certain great persons, who had influence with men in power. Instances of this kind are common. They are however, unjust, impolitical, and unchristian. No wise legislature ought to permit such abuses, religion out of the question. They are inconsistent with every thing that is decent and proper, while so many valuable, learned, laborious, humble, modest men, are pining in want. I know that reflections of this nature are calculated to disoblige those who are interested: but, regardless of consequences, *without the least dislike to any man living, or the smallest view to any one individual, or a wish to have any thing better for myself, and actuated only with a love to truth, and the advancement of our common christianity, I for one, protest in the face of the sun, against all such abuses.* And I solemnly avow, that the spirit of the present times is such, that unless these, and similar disorders be rectified, by the wisdom of the legislature, the whole ecclesiastical fabric in this country, will ere long, be completely overturned.(6) Nothing can prevent it, but a speedy and thorough reformation. If the bishops of the land, as first in dignity, would be first in this grand work: If they would make a merit of necessity, and, like bishop Wilson, resign voluntarily, what they cannot long possess in safety: If they would make an offer to their country

(6) The church of France, before the revolution, consisted of 18 arch-bishops, 118 bishops, 366,264 clergy, regular and secular, who together enjoyed a revenue of about five millions sterling. The kingdom was divided into 34,498 parishes, besides 4,644 annexed parishes; in all 39,142 parishes.

to withdraw from the upper house ; (7) resign all their secular honours, and commence genuine ministers of the gospel : or, should this be too much to expect ; if they would renounce their several pluralities, (8)

(7) This is an abuse unknown in any other protestant church in Europe, and would never have been submitted to in the purest ages of Christianity. Would to God our governors in church and state could see it right to—but what shall I say ? Why should I desire impossible changes ?—It is because I wish as well as any man to my country, that I desire every thing to be removed that may provoke the divine displeasure against us, as a nation and people, and bring on the total dissolution of the political frame of things. The wishes of an obscure clergyman, however, will be less in the scale, than *the small dust upon the balance*, when weighed against the vast body of *arcbbishops, bishops, deans, prebends, canons, archdeacons, rectors, vicars, curates, lecturers, commissioners, chancellors, proctors, surrogates, &c. &c.* with which our church abounds.—We clergymen should do well frequently to study the 34th chapter of Ezekiel. It might do us much good.

“ Yet clergy, while your orbit is your place,  
Lights of the world, and stars of human race,  
But if eccentric ye forsake your sphere,  
Prodigious, ominous, and view'd with fear  
The comet's baneful influence is a dream,  
Your's real and pernicious in th' extreme.”

“ Oh laugh, or mourn with me, the rueful jest  
A cassock'd huntsman, and a fiddling priest ;  
He from Italian songsters takes his cue,  
Set Paul to music, he shall quote him too.  
He takes the field ; the master of the pack  
Cries, well done, saint !—and claps him on the back.  
Is this the path of sanctity ? Is this  
To stand a waymark in the road to bliss ?  
Himself a wanderer from the narrow way,  
His silly sheep, what wonder if they stray ?”

“ The sacred function, in your hands is made,  
Sad sacrifice ! no function, but a trade.”

(8) It is no uncommon thing for the bishops of our church to hold such preferments as are utterly incompatible with each other. Hinchecliffe was bishop of Peterborough, and master of Trinity college in Cambridge. As bishop, he ought, by every law of honour, and conscience, and the gospel, to have been resident

and quietly retire into their respective dioceses, never appearing in the great council of the nation, but when absolutely wanted: if they would come among the clergy—converse with them freely, and treat them as

in his diocese, among the clergy and people; as master of Trinity, his presence could not be dispensed with.

We have had others, who have enjoyed several incompatible preferments—a *bishopric*—a *headship of a college*—a *prebendary*—a *rectory*—and other emoluments; as bishop, a man ought to be in his diocese: as head of a college he must be resident; as prebend, certain duties are due; as rector of a parish, his absence cannot be dispensed with. And as a lord of parliament, his presence is frequently and justly required.—What account their lordships can give, either to God or man, for such of these preferments as are absolutely incompatible one with another, it behoves them well to consider. Such examples have a deadly effect upon the interests of religion. Were they to preach like Paul, who would regard them, when they see they do not believe their own professions? No rank, no talents, no learning, no good sense, no respectability can excuse such a conduct.—We are continually hearing of the rapid spread of infidelity. The bishops of London and Durham are loud in their complaints. But what appears surprising to me, is, that they and others should speak so strongly of the overthrow of christianity in France: it is not christianity which has experienced a subversion there: it is the doctrine of Antichrist; and its subversion will ultimately prove one of the greatest blessings God could bestow upon the nations.—But who is to blame for the spread of infidelity? The bishops and clergy of the land more than any other people in it. We, as a body of men, are almost solely and exclusively culpable. Our negligence, lukewarmness, worldly-mindedness, and immorality, will ruin the country. And when the judgments of God come upon the land, they will fall peculiarly heavy upon the heads of our order of men.

One word upon the situation of the unhappy Irish. We cry out against them for their rebellious conduct. Is there not, however, a cause, for their dissatisfaction? The grievances of the protestant part of the people are many and considerable. The bishop of Derry, whose *bishopric* is 15,000 pounds a year, is now rambling over Europe, and, has not set foot in his diocese for twenty-four years.

This is a specimen of the treatment which churchmen meet with.—Can we wonder, if they, as well as the catholics and dissenters, should murmur? Ireland would at this moment, in all probability, have been lost to England, had not the mad and

brethren: if they would go about doing good in all condescension and humility through their several districts, preaching the word of life, in an evangelical strain, among the people, after the example of the

bloody zeal of the catholics, united the protestants in their own defence, for the protection of their lives and property.

There are twenty-two of these bishops who preside over the established church in Ireland, at the expence of 74,000 pounds a year; that is at the rate of 3,368 pounds per annum a man, besides all their other preferments. Some of them are known to be very worthy characters; but others, like the one just mentioned, are extremely to blame, though surely not in the same degree. While such are the shepherds, no wonder if the sheep go astray. Ought we to be surprised if the Dissenters and Methodists succeed in making converts? if infidelity abound and run like wild fire among the people? if they complain, wish to overturn such a system of corruption, and rise in rebellion for the purpose? Nothing but true religion, or a sense of the impolicy of the measure, can restrain them. I do affirm, that the slothful and temporising bishops and clergy of Europe, are the main authors of the present miseries of Europe, and we may justly and infallibly expect, divine Providence will ere long kick us off our perches, as has been the case in other countries, and give our offices and emoluments to those who have been more worthy of them. Nothing can save us, unless we become alive to the interests—not of the church, as a secular institution—but to the interests of pure, disinterested, evangelical religion. What might not the 18,000 clergymen in this country do, were all but zealously concerned for the honour of the Lord Jesus, and the salvation of the people committed to our care? The face of things in every moral point of view, would be extremely different.—What an horrible hell shall we parsons have when we leave our present beds of down? How will the devils exult over myriads of full-fed bishops, doctors, and dignified dons, who have rioted upon the spoils of the church, and neglected or abused their holy charge?

Among other causes of complaint in our sister kingdom, many of the bishoprics are filled up by the viceroy from among the English clergy, and the best livings are possessed by Englishmen. Hence a very frequent non-residence. Every impartial person must consider this as a real grievance. The Irish clergy are, with some few honourable exceptions, in a state truly deplorable, and the great mass of the laity not less so. What wonder, if the people, left to perish by their ministers for lack of knowledge, should rise up and cut the throats of those ministers? This is a just re-action of Providence. We talk of the Wild Irish, and

great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, and his apostles: if they would renounce their pomp and splendour, and set their faces in good earnest against all monopolies of livings; against non-residents; against all immoral, disorderly, and irreligious clergymen: if they would be the zealous and avowed friends and patrons of laborious pastors, in particular; and of good men of all descriptions, in general; then would the church of England soon become, more than ever, the glory of the churches, and the bishops of that church would be the glory of all bishops.

It is, however, not to be doubted, that men, possessed of the loaves and fishes, will laugh at all this as visionary and enthusiastic.

“I know the warning song is sung in vain,  
That few will hear, and fewer heed the strain.”

I have only to reply—Look at the bishops and clergy of France!—They now think themselves hardly treated.—But, as a body, they have been excessively to

speak of them as being little raised above a state of nature. Let it be considered who is to blame for all this. The bishops and clergy, I vow. But the fault is greatly in the ecclesiastical part of the constitutions of the two countries, which will permit the clerical order of men to receive the emoluments of the church, without performing the duties for which we are paid. No man can surely say, that a reform here would do us any harm! But if a reform in church-matters is never to be brought about till the bishops and clergy themselves embark in it, there is reason to fear the event is at no little distance. I must however, do my own order the justice to observe, that in former periods, whatever reformations in religion have been brought forward, some of the clergy have been the most active and effective instruments. God send us again a few more Wickliffs, Cranmers, Latimers, Ridleys, Hookers, and Gilpins, to deliver us from the remaining dregs of Popish superstition which cleave to us, that the British churches may be the glory and envy of the whole world.

“Triumphant here may Jesus reign,  
And on his vineyard sweetly smile;  
While all the virtues of his train,  
Adorn the church and bless our isle.”

blame; and their present sufferings are proportionate to their former culpability. Happy will it be for us, if their negligence and misfortunes make us wise and cautious! The fate of the Jewish clergy of old, and of the French, Dutch, Flemish, Italian, and Swiss clergy of our own times, comes, like a peal of thunder, preaching reform; real, and effectual, and speedy reform, to the clergy of every country.

I, for one, give up all these abuses as indefensible. Every man of common sense and observation, whose eyes are not blinded by prejudice, and whose mind is not closed by sinful habit and self-interest, must see that they are wrong. But, whatever means Divine Providence may use to correct them—for *corrected in due time they must be*—the gospel of Christ is not to be blamed for them. It gives them no countenance; it predicts their rise, their countenance, their downfall: and it denounces nothing less than the most extreme condemnation against all those, who pervert the divine ordinances to secular and self-interested purposes. It is neither emperors, nor kings, nor popes, nor archbishops, nor bishops, nor clergymen of any inferior description, that shall escape the just sentence of the universal Judge. He will make no distinction. He knows no difference between man and man, but what moral and religious qualifications make. Whatsoever a person soweth, that shall he also reap. Mighty sinners shall be mightily punished. Eminently good and useful men shall be eminently rewarded.

Discerning men, observing the conduct, character, and precepts of the Saviour of the world, and comparing them with the conduct and manners of our church-dignitaries, cannot help seeing a very striking contrast. His kingdom was not to be of this world: but the conduct of our bishops, is secular. His meat and drink was to do the will of him that sent him. He literally went about doing good. He preached every where, and to all descriptions of men. A genuine

patriot, he was never weary of contributing to the happiness of his country. He was frequently in the temple, but never in the palace, unless when dragged thither by force. Our learned prelates,(9) however, are so occupied in the great council of the nation ; in dancing attendance at court ; in guarding their secular emoluments from waste ; in visiting the nobility and gentry of the land ; and in other worldly engagements of various descriptions ; that they have but little time left, either for reading the Scriptures, for private retirement, or for preaching the gospel to the poor of the flock, in their respective districts.(40) To hear

(9) Among the bishops of the church of England, may be found some characters the most respectable for every moral, literary, and religious attainment; and the country is under the utmost obligation to them for their exertions at different periods of our history. But were any individuals among them ever so desirous, they have it not in their power to rectify abuses, and reform what they may conceive to be amiss. The system is too compact and well digested. Their hands are tied behind them. The prejudices of some, the interests of others the supineness of not a few, and the fears of disturbing the long established order of things in most, form an insuperable barrier against every reform; insomuch that nothing can accomplish any considerable change for the better, but a convulsion. If the archbishop of Canterbury, and the whole bench of bishops, had discernment and humility, and public spirit, and self-denial enough, to come forward of their own accord, and with one consent desire an ameliorated state of things, there might be some hope. But that six and twenty interested men should be brought to concur in a business of this sort, is an impossibility. The sacrifice is too great! Human nature is too frail to make it.

(40) Bishops ought surely to reside in their dioceses among their clergy, preaching in season and out of season ; countenancing and encouraging the good ; reproving, exhorting, warning, punishing, the unworthy and immoral part of their clergy. The contrary to this, however, is the case. If a man happens to have got a little more zeal than ordinary, and labours to do more good than the generality of his brethren, immediately they are all in arms against him. And nothing is more common than for his ecclesiastical superiors to frown upon him, and to stigmatize him as a Methodist, and to oppose his interest in every way they can contrive. Whereas, a clergyman may be a man of pleasure and

a bishop preach is a sort of phenomenon in the country. And, if any of that body—some of whom are great and good men, do vouchsafe, once in a way, as an extreme favour, to indulge the people of their dio-

dissipation, gay, foolish, silly, trifling; he may spend his time in the diversions of the field; drink, swear, and live as foolishly as the most foolish of his flock, and yet no harm shall happen. He is no Methodist, and, therefore, every favour shall be shewn to him which he can desire. Methodism is like the sin against the Holy Ghost; it is neither to be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come!

Be it observed, that the increase of Dissenters, and the spread of Methodism, are both entirely owing to lukewarmness, or negligence, or disorderly conduct, or bigotry, or the persecuting spirit of the clergy in the establishment. And there is no way under heaven of preventing the most mischievous consequences, but by adopting new measures, reforming what is amiss, and out-preaching, out-labouring, and out living all our opposers. The pride of office has injured us extremely. The disdain frequently expressed by us against the several sectarists, has been highly impolitical and sometimes unchristian.—Has not every man living the same right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience tb<sup>o</sup> we have? To his own master each one must give an account. He that worships God most spiritually, and obeys him most universally, believing in the name of his only-begotten Son, is the best man, and most acceptable to the Divine Being, whether he be found in a church, in a Quaker's meeting-house, in a dissenting place of worship, of any other description, or upon the top of a mountain. How long shall we be carried away by weak and superstitious distinctions?—In every nation, and among all denominations of men, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. And if God will accept, why should not man?—The Saviour of the world himself hath given us an infallible definition of the gospel-church: Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.—Let any man consult Locke on Toleration, and he can have no doubt on his mind concerning the liberality of the genuine gospel of our blessed Saviour.—It has been the custom of the established clergy of all countries to arrogate to themselves a kind of infallibility. Nay, there is scarcely a parson among us all, whether Churchman, Methodist, Quaker, or Dissenter of any other description, that has not got a church, a chapel, or a meeting-house in his belly. We are all Popes in our own way: every denomination has its imperious and overbearing dictators.—Let no man think the worse of the New-Testament-religion, because of the different hobby-horses which we parsons

cease, where they happen to spend a little time, they usually affect so much pomp and dignity in their manner, and their discourses are so dry and unevangelical; so stiff, so cool, so essaical, so critical, so ethical, so

think proper to ride. Our order has had its day; and a pretty long day it has been! The pope has ridden the bishops, the bishops have ridden the priests, and the priests have ridden the people.—The tables are now turning; and we Parsons must be contented to be ridden by the people. But if the people, in their zeal for freedom, should proceed to cast off the Divine yoke—and there is some danger!—If they should insolently reject the authority of Jesus Christ, our only Lord, and Master, and Saviour, he will visit their offences with a rod, and their sin with scourges. He has a right to our services. We are not our own, but are bought with a price, and no man shall refuse him subjection, and prosper. Every thinking person must feel that he is a dependent creature, and insufficient for his own happiness; a sinful creature, and incapable of atoning for his own transgressions.

Among the bishops of the church of England, may be found characters the most respectable for every moral, literary, and religious attainment. I add, that several of the bishops and clergy of the Irish church, have been also highly respectable, as well as many of the inferior orders of our own clergy. So likewise have been many of the bishops and clergy of the French church. Usher, the Irish archbishop, was not a pious man only, but even a walking library, in point of learning. Newcombe is a character of the most respectable literary kind. Warburton used to say of Taylor, "he had no conception of a greater genius upon earth than was that holy man."—Where too was there ever a more admirable character than the author of *Telemachus*! or more learned men than *Camet*, *Du Pin*, *Montfaucon*, and others among the French clergy? Our own *Cotes*, though but a private clergyman, and young in years at the time of his decease, is said by *Watson*, to have been Second to none but *Newton* in sublimity of philosophic genius. But as the learning, piety, genius, and amiableness of manners of *Fenelon* and his brethren, could not excuse and make tolerable the corruptions of the church of France, so neither can the learning, genius, and piety of the bishops and clergy of England and Ireland, excuse and make justifiable the more tolerable corruptions of the churches of these two countries.—We must either simplify and evangelize our ecclesiastical constitutions, or they must fall. I speak this, not from any personal pique or disappointment, not from a love of novelty and change, but upon the authority of the prophetic Scriptures—with a view to the near completion of the 1260 mystical years—and from a

heathen-like, that the poor of the flock can receive little or no benefit and edification.

These learned gentlemen are so afraid of approaching too near the Methodists,(1) both in their doctrines,

solemn and awful contemplation of the revolutions which are so rapidly taking place all through Europe. The act of union was unwisely managed. What right has any one generation to legislate for all future generations? and especially to tie up their hands from making changes and improvements adapted to the taste of the revolving ages? Upon this principle christianity itself, and even the present constitution of England, is an improper innovation on the wisdom of former ages.

It is evident from the opposition of Horsley, to the abolition of holidays, that we may not expect from the bench of bishops the smallest concessions towards a reformation in the ecclesiastical part of the constitution. To me, however, what we usually call holidays appear in the light of very serious evils to the community. Let a man conscientiously observe the Lord's day, and I will excuse him every other holiday in the calendar.

(1) Methodist is a term of reproach, which has been made use of for many years, to stigmatize all the most serious, zealous, and lively professors of religion. It is not confined to any one sect or party; but is common, more or less, to all who are peculiarly animated in the concerns of religion. In the church of England, all those ministers and people are called Methodists, who believe, and preach, and contend for the doctrines of the thirty-nine articles of religion. And Arians, Socinians, and Formalists of every description, who continue to attend public worship in the establishment, are considered by the undiscerning world as her only true members. In short, all who embrace, with a lively and zealous faith, the doctrines of the said thirty-nine articles, among all the denominations, are by way of ignominy, denominated Methodists. To be zealous, in the most important of all concerns, is held as a proverb of reproach! You may be a zealous philosopher, a zealous politician, or a zealous sciolist of almost every description, and you shall meet with approbation and praise; but if you discover any considerable degree of warmth and zeal for the grand peculiarities of the gospel, and vital, practical, experimental religion, then the devil and all his industrious servants will stigmatize you with every name which they consider as opprobrious and disgraceful. Indeed, Methodist is in the eighteenth century, what Puritan was in the seventeenth. After the restoration, people, to shew their aversion to the Puritans, turned every appearance of religion into ridicule, and from the extreme

and manner of preaching, that their sermons are cast more in the mould of Seneca, or Epictetus, than in that of Paul; and delivered with all the apathy of an ancient philosopher.

“ How oft, when Paul has serv'd us with a text,  
Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully preach'd?”

Hence these learned prelates are found to do but little good. Such preaching never was of much use to the Christian church. Christ crucified alone is the power of God unto salvation. Now and then, indeed, in the course of three, four, five, six, or sometimes even ten or twelve years, these shepherds of Christ's flock parade through the country, paying their respects to the great, and holding confirmations; but where is the spirit of a Peter or a Paul to be discovered? Or, to come nearer to what might be expected, where is the spirit of a Burnet,(2) a Leighton,(3) a Beveridge,

of hypocrisy, flew at once to that of profligacy; so now, abundance of people are so alarmed at the idea of being thought Methodists, that they absolutely give up the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and become as lukewarm, and indifferent to all religion, as though it was no part of their concern. And yet these wiseacres, in the true spirit of the ancient Scfibes and Pharisees, keep roaring out, the church! the church! the temple of the Lord! the temple of Lord are we!

(2) This excellent man was extremely laborious in his episcopal office. Every summer, he made a tour, for six weeks or two months, through some district of his bishopric, daily preaching from church to church, so as in the compass of three years, besides his triennial visitation, to go through all the principal livings of his diocese.

(3) Leighton was a most exemplary character, both in his private and public capacity. The life and writings of few men are more worthy of imitation and perusal. He laboured hard to bring about some reformation in the state of things in his own day, and when he found all his efforts ineffectual, he quietly withdrew, resigned his preferment, and lived in private. What Burnet says of him can never be too often repeated, and too generally known.—“He had the greatest elevation of soul, the largest compass of knowledge, the most mortified and heavenly disposition, that I ever yet saw in mortal. He had the greatest parts, as well as virtue, with the most perfect humility that I ever saw in man; and had a sublime

a Hall, a Ken, a Bedell, a Reynolds, or a Wilson, to be seen? Our confirmations and our ordinations(4) for the sacred ministry, are dwindled into painful and disgusting ceremonies. Besides, is it to be supposed, that the whole of a bishop's business is to ordain ministers, and hold confirmations, to spend their time in

strain in preaching, with so grave a gesture, and such a majesty, both of thought, of language, and pronunciation, that I never once saw a wandering eye where he preached, and I have seen whole assemblies often melt into tears before him; and of whom I can say with great truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with him for above two and twenty years, I never knew him to say an idle word, that had not a direct tendency to edification; and I never once saw him in any other temper, but that which I wished to be in, in the last moments of my life."

Locke gives us a similar account of Pococke, "I can say of him what few men can say of any friend of theirs, nor I of any other of my acquaintance; that I do not remember I ever saw him in one action, that I did, or could in my own mind blame, or thought amiss in him."

(4) Burnet took large pains in preparing young people for confirmation, and used every means in his power to encourage and excite candidates for ordination to come with due qualifications. He complains in the most affecting terms, of the low state in which they usually appeared before him. The state of things is not much improved since that great prelate's day. We have at this time, indeed, a very considerable number of men in the establishment, of the utmost respectability, both for learning, piety, and diligence in their calling; but, when we consider, that the clergy of this country, independent of Scotland and Ireland, are a body of 18,000 men, the number of truly moral, religious, and diligent characters, is comparatively small. This is one main reason of the prodigious increase of the Dissenters and Methodism; and for the same reason infidelity is at this moment running like wild-fire among the great body of the common people. There never was a time when there was greater need of zeal, and humility, and condescension, and piety, and diligence and attention to the grand peculiarities of the gospel in our bishops and clergy, than in the present day. If we as a great body of men paid by the state for the purpose, rouse not speedily from our supine condition, and come boldly and manfully forward—not in a fiery, persecuting spirit, but in the spirit of our Divine Master—we shall neither have churches to preach in, nor people to whom to preach. Let the bishops and clergy of England look at their brethren in France—and arise—set out on a new plan—or be for ever fallen!

secular engagements, and to attend their place in the house of lords? Is it for these purposes solely they are each of them paid by the public, from two to twenty thousand pounds a year?

“ Good, my brother,  
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
Shew me the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
Whilst, like a careless libertine,  
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads.”

Can we, or ought we to be surprised, that many of our worthy countrymen should be drawn aside into the paths of infidelity, when it is considered what is the general conduct of our spiritual superiors, and how the above sacred ordinances are frequently administered? Is it possible the Scriptures should be true, and our secular and lukewarm, our negligent and unpreaching bishops, to be in favour with the Divine Being? If they be in safety for a future state, surely religion must have changed its nature. Their episcopal conduct is the reverse of Paul's injunctions to Timothy, and the bishops of the church of Asia; to give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, and to take heed to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. The Lord of the invisible world hath said, and he who hath the keys of death and hell hath said: Strive to enter into the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able: Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. If commands and declarations like these be true, then woe! woe! woe! to the bishops of England! May we not say of them, with too general an application, but with some few honourable exceptions, as good old Latimer said of his most reverend and right reverend brethren in his

day:—"There is a gap in hell, as wide as from Calais to Dover, and it is all filled with unpreaching prelates." (5)

Let not one suppose that I have any prejudice against a bishop, or a clergyman, as such. There are some whose learning, piety, diligence, zeal, and talents I admire: and I myself am of the clerical order from the most conscientious choice; but I cannot prevail on myself to call things by wrong names, and to give

(5) Latimer's words are:—"O that a man might have the contemplation of hell, that the devil would allow a man to look into hell, to see the estate of it;—if one were admitted to view hell thus, and beholding it thoroughly, the devil should say: On yonder side are punished unpreaching prelates, I think a man might see far as a kenning, and perceive nothing but unpreaching prelates; he might look as far as Calais, I warrant you."

A learned friar in Italy, famous for his learning and preaching, was commanded to preach before the Pope at a year of jubilee: and to be furnished, he repaired a good while before to Rome, to see the fashion of the conclave, to accommodate his sermon the better. When the day came that he was to preach, having ended his prayer, he looking a long time about, at last cried with a loud voice three times—*Peter was a fool!*—*Peter was a fool!*—*Peter was a fool!*—Which words ended, he came out of the pulpit. Being after convened before the Pope, and asked why he so carried himself, he answered, surely; holy father, if a priest may go to heaven, abounding in wealth, honour and preferment, and live at ease, never or seldom to preach, then surely *Peter was a fool*, who took such a hard way in travelling, in fasting, and in preaching, to go thither.

Most of our English bishops are unpreaching prelates. The bishop of London, and some few more, are exceptions to this general rule. If the present times, and the awful predicament in which every clergyman now stands, will not rouse us to a sense of danger, and a greater degree of zeal and diligence in our calling, we shall richly deserve our approaching, impending and inevitable fate, unless prevented by a speedy and effectual return to evangelical principles and practices. The gospel is either true or it is false. If it be false, let us cast off the mask, and appear in our true colours. If it be true, let us conduct ourselves as though we believed it to be so, and leave no stone unturned, no means untried, to promote its spread and influence among the world in general, and among the people committed to our care in particular.

flattering titles where it is plain they are not deserved. Gravely and seriously speaking, the number of clerical characters, who will be received with approbation by the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, in the great day of final retribution will be small, extremely small. Appearances at present are against us. And this is strongly implied in our Saviour's very solemn discourse to the bishops and clergy among the Jews, in the twenty-third of Matthew, just before he left our world.

The clergy of every country in christendom have been, at the same time, the bane and the bulwark of religion; the bane, by their pride, misconduct, superstition, negligence, and spiritual domination; and the bulwark by their piety, excellent learning, and admirable defences of the doctrines of religion, or the outworks of christianity.

The popish clergy have preached and written so much in defence of the triple tyrant, and the superstitions of their religion; that scepticism and infidelity almost universally prevail among thinking men of that denomination. The more eagerly the clergy contend, the more mischief they do their cause: for really the things for which they contend are not defensible.

We of the English establishment too, who have so long boasted of the excellence of our church; congratulated ourselves so frequently upon our happy condition; paid ourselves so many fine compliments upon the unparalleled purity of our hierarchy, that a stranger would be led to conclude, that we must be the holiest, happiest, and most flourishing church upon the face of the earth: Whereas, when you go into our most stately and magnificent cathedrals, and other sacred edifices, you find them almost empty and forsaken. At best, all is deadness and lukewarmness both with priest and people.(6) In various instances

(6) Burnet says, "I have lamented, during my whole life, that I saw so little true zeal among our clergy. I saw much of

there is little more appearance of devotion, than in a Jews' synagogue. Go where you will through the kingdom, one or the other of these is very generally the case, except where the officiating clergyman is strictly moral in his conduct, serious, earnest, and lively in his manner, and evangelical in his doctrines. Where this happens to be so, the stigma of Methodism is affixed to his character, and his name is a proverb of reproach, in proportion to his usefulness, by the sceptics and infidels all around, in which they are joined by the rich, the fashionable, and the gay,

it in the clergy of the church of Rome, though it is both ill directed and ill conducted. I saw much zeal likewise throughout the foreign churches. The Dissenters have a great deal among them; but the main body of our clergy has always appeared dead and lifeless to me; and, instead of animating one another, they lay one another asleep."

Let any discerning man take a candid, yet impartial survey of the clergy, for a circuit of sixty miles round his own neighbourhood, and then let him say, whether the matter is mended since the time in which the good bishop wrote these words. Let him attend the Dissenting ordinations, and clerical meetings; the Methodist conferences, and district meetings; let him next proceed to our church confirmations, ordinations and visitations; and then let him say, on which side is to be found the greatest appearance of evangelical religion. Our confirmations are a burlesque, our ordinations disorderly, and our visitations riotous and intemperate. These are melancholy facts. The parson and his wardens must have a good soaking together once a year at least.

I observe too, that for a circuit of many miles round our two English Universities, a greater degree of ignorance and stupidity prevails among the common people, than in most other parts of the country. This is a strange circumstance, but easily accounted for from the improper conduct of abundance of the clergy and gentlemen of those two seminaries of learning.

It holds equally true, that, all through the kingdom, wherever there is a cathedral, and a greater number of parsons than ordinary, there is usually the least appearance of real religion among the people. The general luke-warmness of the clergy is a curse to every neighbourhood where they abound! It is the same in catholic countries, and must be so, in the nature of things, through every country, unless we live in the spirit of the gospel.

with the bishop and clergy at their head. How many such,

" For their bellies' sake

Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!  
 'Of other care they little reckoning make,  
 Than how to scramble at the shearer's feast,  
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest;  
 Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
 A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least  
 That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!  
 What recks it them? what need they? They are sped:  
 And when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
 Grate on their scannel pipes of wretched straw,  
 The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
 But swell'n with wind, and the rank mist they draw,  
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:  
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
 Daily devours apace: and nothing said,  
 But that two-handed engine at the door,  
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

These words of Milton are certainly severe, but not more so than the occasion deserves. If they were applicable in his day, they are no less so in the present. As a body, we are, of all men in England, the most inexcusable. The great mass of the people are going headlong to the devil in their sins; the nation, because of its transgressions, is absolutely verging towards destruction; and yet a vast majority of the 18,000 parsons are insensible, both of the temporal and eternal danger, to which we, and our people, and our country are exposed. If this censure seem intemperate, let any man prove that it is not just. I sincerely wish it were wholly undeserved. I know some good men, useful, laborious, and honourable men, among the clergy; men, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; but I know also there is a very considerable number, who are—what shall I say?—Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the sons of infidelity rejoice; lest the disci-

ples of Paine triumph—they are exactly like the persons described by the prophet, a little before the destruction of Jerusalem:—His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant: they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough; and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter. Come, ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

I have no pleasure in exposing the nakedness of the established religion of my country, or in exciting against myself the indignation of my clerical brethren; but the times are alarming; the great head of the church is evidently displeased with us; and there is no mincing the matter any longer. We ought to examine the ground upon which we stand. If it be in any respect found untenable, we should change our measures; follow the determination of Heaven; and, by complying with its high behests, put ourselves under its guardian care. If, without looking forward, or giving ourselves any concern about what is right or what is wrong, we are determined to defend whatever in former ages has received the sanction of law, and in our day, the force of custom, we must take the consequences. We shall, most assuredly, in due time, share in the general wreck of the nations. I have no more doubt of this, than I have of the authority of the Sacred Writings.

The animosity and uncharitableness, which have ever-more prevailed among the different denominations of Christians, is another cause of the growing infidelity of the present age. It is not said now, as in the days of old, “ See how these Christians love one another:”—but—“ See how these Christians hate one another.” Catholics damn protestants, and protestants

tants revile catholics.(7) One sect of protestants anathematizes another sect; every one holding forth

(7) What a horrible curse has popery been to christendom in point of population! France alone before the revolution, contained upwards of 366,000 secular and regular clergy, besides an immense number of nuns. This vast body of males and females, were all enjoined by the laws of the church, to continue in a state of celibacy. In the whole of christendom, there was not less than 225,444 monasteries, about a century ago. How much greater the number before the reformation? Now, reckoning twenty persons only to one monastery, there must be, in these several sinks of sin and pollution—upwards of 4,500,000 souls debarred from all the comforts of the married state, and living in direct opposition to the great law of nature—Increase and multiply. Haste the completion of the 1260 years, O God, which thou hast determined for the reign of the man of sin, and let us see his destruction with our own eyes; so will we praise thy name, and shout, hallelujah! hallelujah! Babylon is fallen! is fallen! with concordant hearts and voices!\*

When William the conqueror came over into England, he found about a third part of the lands in the possession of the clergy.

Upwards of three thousand one hundred and eighty religious houses were suppressed by Henry VIII, and his predecessors.

It is computed that fifty thousand persons were contained in these several religious houses.

Such a number of persons, living in a state of celibacy, when the country did not contain more than three or four millions of inhabitants, must have had a most pernicious effect upon its population.

The sum total of the clear yearly revenue of the several religious houses, at the time of their dissolution, of which we have an account, was 140,785 pounds, six shillings and three pence three-farthings. And as the value of money is now seven or eight times what it was in the days of Henry the eighth, we cannot reckon the whole at less than a million sterling a year.

Besides this, there were many other religious foundations dissolved, of which we have no account. The plate and goods of different kinds, which came into the hands of the king, at the same time, were of immense value.

\* According to the royal census of Spain, taken in the year 1801, there were in that country 2,434,772 male inhabitants between the age of fifteen and sixty: of these 152,585 were regular and secular clergy, making about one for every fifteen men in the country. Strange prostitution of the sacred office!—Pbil. editor.

the peculiar doctrines of their own party as the truths of God, in opposition to the peculiar doctrines of those who differ from them. Instead of turning our zeal against the immoralities of the age, we have frequently turned it against men, who, in every moral and religious point of view, were, perhaps, better than ourselves. A spirit of infallibility, in a greater or less degree, pervades all parties. In this unchristian strife, the pure spirit of the gospel has been banished from the great bodies of professors, and has taken up its abode among a few solitary individuals, dispersed through the several churches of Christendom. Men of discernment, seeing this to be the state of things through all denominations, are led to suppose that there is no truth among any of them. The fact, however, is directly the contrary. They have all gotten the saving truth, if they hold it but in piety, charity, and righteousness. They all believe in a Saviour of the world. Let them only observe the moral and religious precepts of his gospel, and I do not see what more is necessary to entitle them to our Christian regards. They may not come up to the full orthodox belief of the gospel; but they are such characters as our Saviour himself would not have treated with severity. And till religion is reduced to the simple form in which he left it, there never will be an end to the bickerings and uncharitableness of party, and infidelity will of course prevail.

The general wickedness and immoral conduct of Christians, so called, is another grand cause of infidelity.—For let men profess what they will, they never can persuade any thinking person that they believe their own principles, while they are seen to transgress every rule of moral and religious obligation, and in various transactions between man and man, conduct themselves in a manner, of which abundance of the heathen, both ancient and modern, would be ashamed.

All these circumstances, with others of a similar kind, are the causes why so many persons are now found, who reject the divine mission of Jesus Christ.(8)

But, can we justly argue from the abuse to the disuse? Is Jesus, the most moral and divine of characters, an impostor, because many of his ministers and servants have proved unfaithful and treacherous? Were the other eleven apostles all knavés, because Judas was a traitor? Are the eternal truths of the gospel to be exploded, because men have been presumptuous enough to adulterate them with the profane mixtures of human ordinances?(9) Or doth our obstinacy alter the nature of the evidence, and render the situation of unbelievers more secure? The course of things is fixed and unchangeable. The sun will shine, fire will burn, water will drown, the wind will blow, time will fly, the tides will flow, maugre all the scepticism of philosophers.

The moral relation of things is not less invariable; and our being inconsiderate enough to deny those relations, and the obligations that arise from them; will neither destroy them, nor render our situation more secure. My being so foolish as to reject the existence of God, and so infatuated as to suppose that there is no Redeemer, no Sanctifier, no heaven, no hell, no devil, no soul, no angel, no spirit, and that

(8) Newton said, that infidelity will overrun Europe, before the millenial reign of Christ commences. The corruptions of religion in all the Christian establishments cannot easily be purged away in any other manner. They must be subverted by violence and blood; it will be impossible to remove them in any other way.

(9) "Who that ever really professed the Christian religion, from the times of the apostles to the present moment, ever considered it as a human establishment, the work of particular men, or nations, subject to decline with their changes, or to perish with their falls?"

the Bible is all a grievous imposition upon mankind, doth not prove, either that there is no God, or that there is no reality in the representations made by the gospel.(50) Every man must allow that it is possible for the Almighty to reveal his will to the world, if he thinks proper so to do. It will be further granted, that some such revelation seems desirable to allay the fears, and confirm the hopes of men. If then it ever should be made, what stronger evidence could be produced of its coming from God, than that with which the present Sacred Writings are attended? The very errors of professors, and the corrupt state of religion in every christian country, are the literal accomplishment of several prophecies, and so far are they from being any just objection to the gospel, that

(50) If the various opinions, sects and parties, which prevail among Christians, be considered by unbelievers as an objection to the gospel itself, let them call to mind, that there is not a smaller number of contradictory opinions prevalent among those who reject christianity.—The author of the *Connoisseur* hath thrown together a few of the unbeliever's tenets, under the contradictory title of—

*The Unbeliever's Creed.*

“ I believe that there is no God, but that matter is God, and God is matter; and that it is no matter whether there is any God or no. I believe also, that the world was not made; that the world made itself; that it had no beginning; that it will last for ever, world without end.—I believe that a man is a beast, that the soul is the body, and the body is the soul; and that after death there is neither body nor soul.—I believe there is no religion; that natural religion is the only religion; and that all religion is unnatural. I believe not in Moses; I believe in the first philosophy; I believe not the Evangelists; I believe in Chubb, Collins, Toland, Tindal, Morgan, Mandeville, Woolston, Hobbes, Shaftesbury; I believe in lord Bolingbroke; I believe not St. Paul. I believe not revelation; I believe in tradition; I believe in the Talmud; I believe in the Alcoran; I believe not in the Bible; I believe in Socrates; I believe in Confucius; I believe in Sanchonia-thon; I believe in Mahomet; I believe not in Christ.—Lastly, I believe in all unbelief.”

they are a strong proof of the divine mission of its great Author.

But could it even be solidly evinced, that Jesus was an impostor, that the virgin Mary was a bad woman, that the Scriptures are false, and that the scheme of redemption therein contained is a cunningly devised fable, yet still it is found true in fact, that a lively believer in Christ Jesus, who hath done justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with his God ; is much happier than the most accomplished infidel that ever existed, both in life, and at the approach of death. Turn your attention to Chesterfield: in him you see a finished character, all that rank, honour, riches, learning, philosophy can make us. But was he happy? And are you more at rest in your spirit! What is your life?—You eat, and drink, and sleep, and dress, and dance, and sit down to play. You labour, toil, transact business. You attend the theatre, the card table, the assembly, the ball, the club, the tavern. In what manner do you spend your time at any of these places? You talk ; make your observations ; look upon one another ; dance, play, trifle like the rest of the triflers there. And what are you to do again to-morrow? The next day? The next week? The next year? You are to eat, and drink, and sleep, and labour, and dance, and transact business, and dress, and play, and engage in small-talk !(1)

(1) The man of fashion is described by Mr. C. Wesley, in the following manner.

“ What is a modern man of fashion ?  
 A man of taste and dissipation :  
 A busy man, without employment,  
 A happy man without enjoyment.  
 Who squanders all his time and treasures  
 On empty joys, and tasteless pleasures ;  
 Visits, attendants, and attention,  
 And courtly arts, too low to mention.  
 In sleep, and dress, and sport, and play,  
 He throws his worthless life away ;

And is this all? Was it for this immortal faculties were bestowed upon us? Miserable round of secular pursuits, and empty dissipation! If faith in the Bible be a deception, it hath at least the merit of being a comfortable and beneficial one. It rescues us from this pitiful way of spending our time and money; it enables us to abound in works of faith and labours of love, in some degree, worthy of our high-raised expectations, and prepares us to die with a hope full of immortality. We quit the stage of life without a sigh or tear, and we go wind and tide into the haven of everlasting rest.(2)

Has no opinion of his own,  
 But takes from leading beaux the ton :  
 With a disdainful smile or frown  
 He on the rif-rap crowd looks down :  
 The world polite, his friends and he,  
 And all the rest, are—Nobody !  
 Taught by the great his smiles to sell,  
 And how to write, and how to spell;  
 The great his oracles he makes,  
 Copies their vices and mistakes;  
 Custom pursues, his only rule,  
 And lives an ape, and dies a fool."

(2) Few men ever trifled more agreeably, and at the same time more perniciously than Sterne. Among the various beautiful and pathetic passages which occur in his volumes, he administers poison in a manner the most imperceptible and bewitching. Few writers have more corrupted the public taste. He was a man of considerable, but peculiar talents, making great pretensions to sympathy, wit, and benevolence, but with an heart in no small degree depraved. And as he had lived with the reputation of a wit, he was determined to die such, even though he should sacrifice every appearance of Christian piety and decorum. Accordingly, when this clerical buffoon, was in dying circumstances, perceiving death to make his advances upwards, he raised himself in his bed upon his posteriors, and either in a real or pretended rage, swore at the sly assassin, that he should not kill him yet.

This remarkable circumstance, though not mentioned in his life, is strictly true. It is only observed in the account prefixed to his works, that " Sterne died as he lived, the same indifferently,

“ With us no melancholy void,  
 No period lingers unemploy’d,  
 Or unimprov’d below ;  
 Our weariness of life is gone,  
 Who live to serve our God alone,  
 And only him to know.”

No man, however, can prove the falsehood of that inestimable book. Difficulties, many and considerable, it contains. We are not disposed to conceal them. It would be very surprizing, if a book so circumstanced did not.(3) But its foundation is built upon the pillars of everlasting truth. Conscientious unbelievers should examine those difficulties with calmness and patience. The whole collective evidence of the gospel is very considerable, and requires time

careless creature; as, a day or two before, he seemed not in the least affected with his approaching dissolution.”

Barnaby, a physician in London, was intimately acquainted with an atheist. After some time, he was seized with a violent fever, and sent for the doctor. He came and prescribed several medicines, but none of them took effect. At length he told him plainly, “ Sir, I know nothing more that can be done; you must die.” Upon this, he clenched his fists, gnashed his teeth, and said with the utmost fury, “ God! God! I won’t die!” and immediately expired.

(3) “ It would be a miracle greater than any we are instructed to believe, if there were no difficulties in the Sacred Writings; if a being with but five scanty inlets of knowledge, separated but yesterday from his mother earth, and to-day sinking again into her bosom, could fathom the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord God Almighty.”

All arts and sciences abound with difficulties, and a perfect knowledge of them is not to be attained without considerable labour and application; why then should we expect that theology, the first of sciences, and that to which all others ought to be subservient, should be without its abstrusities, and capable of being understood without labour and application of the mind? Nay, even that practical religion which is required of the humblest followers of the Redeemer, demands a high degree of attention. Agonize to enter in at the strait gate, is the command of the Son of God. And did ever any labour more in the cause of virtue than Christ and his apostles?

and application.(4) It is expected that they attend to the consistency, harmony, and connection of all its various parts; the long chain of prophecies undeniably completed in it; the astonishing and well attested miracles that attend it; the perfect sanctity of its author; the purity of its precepts; the sublimity of its doctrines; the amazing rapidity of its progress; the illustrious company of professors, saints, and martyrs, who died to confirm its truth; the testimony of its enemies; together with an infinite number of collateral proofs, and subordinate circumstances, all concurring to form such a body of evidence, as no other truth in the world can shew; such as must necessarily bear down, by its own weight and magnitude, all trivial objections to particular parts. They should consult the best books upon the subject, and call in the assistance of learned and disinterested men, who have made theological subjects their study. They should apply to them as they would to a lawyer about an estate, or a physician about their health. And they should make the investigation a matter of the most diligent in-

(4) There are four grand arguments for the truth of the Bible, the first is the miracles which it records. 2. The prophecies. 3. The goodness of the doctrines. 4. The moral character of the penmen.—The miracles flow from Divine power; the prophecies from Divine understanding; the excellence of the doctrine from Divine goodness; and the moral character of the penmen from Divine purity.—Thus, christianity is built upon these four immovable pillars, the power, the understanding, the goodness, and the purity of God.—I add further:—The Bible must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.—It could not be the invention of good men or angels, for they neither would nor could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, Thus saith the Lord, when it was their own invention.—It could not be the invention of bad men or devils, for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell to all eternity.—I therefore draw this conclusion—the Bible must be given by Divine inspiration.

quiry.(5) Religion is a serious thing. It is either all or nothing. A few pert objections, started in mixed company, or in a circle of friends over the glass, are indecent and despicable.—Shameful herein is the conduct of many vain babblers. They should be excluded society. When the ancient philosopher An-

(5) Watson's *Apology for Christianity*, and his *Apology for the Bible*, are admirably calculated to remove a considerable number of difficulties attending the records of our salvation. Horne's *Letters on Infidelity* are wisely suited to the same purpose. But he who is able and willing to examine thoroughly the grounds of his religion, should have recourse to Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, a work well adapted to give satisfaction to inquiring minds, upon the most important of all subjects, religion. Grotius on the Truth of Christianity, is an excellent little work. Doddridge's *Three Sermons, on the Evidences of Christianity*, seem better suited to the understandings of common readers than almost any other. Lardner's *Credibility*; Michaelis's *Introduction to the New Testament*; Jones's new and full *Method for settling the canonical authority of the New Testament*; and Paley's *View of the Evidences of Christianity*; are all works of high reputation. Beatie's *Evidences of the Christian Religion*, is a valuable small work. Baxter on the Truth of Christianity, is not to be answered. Edwards on the Authority, Style, and Perfection of Scripture, is very valuable. Gildon's *Deist's Manual*—Kidder's *Demonstration of the Messias*—Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae*—Hartley on the Truth of the Christian Religion—Bryant on the Authenticity of the Scriptures—Jortin on the Truth of the Christian Religion—Delany's *Revelation Examined with Candour*—Paschal's *Thoughts on Religion*—Young's *Night Thoughts*, and *Centaur not Fabulous*—Ditton on the Resurrection—Cure of Deism—Foster's Usefulness, Truth, and Excellency of the Christian Revelation—Clark's Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation—Lally's *Principles of the Christian Religion*—Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*—Squire's Indifference for Religion inexcusable—Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity—Murray's *Evidences of the Jewish and Christian Revelations*—Chandler's *Plain Reasons for being a Christian*—Addison on the Truth of Christianity—Watson's *Two Sermons and Charge*—Syke's *Essay upon the Truth of the Christian Religion*—Warburton's *Divine Legislation of Moses*—Gregory Sharpe's *Two Arguments in Defence of Christianity*—Leslie's *Short Method with Jews and Deists*—Berkley's *Minute Philosopher*—Randolph's *View of our Saviour's Ministry*—Clayton's *Vindication of the Histories of the Old and New Testament*

axagoras had expressed in one of his books a doubt concerning the existence of God, the book was burnt by a public decree of his fellow-citizens, and he himself banished his country. These were heathens.—What would they have said to the *philosophers* of the

—Bell's Inquiry into the Divine Missions of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ—Lively Oracles, by the Author of the Whole Duty of Man—Boyle on the Style of Holy Scripture—Macknight on the Gospel-actions as probable—West on the Resurrection—Litton on the Conversion of Paul—La Flèche on the Truth of the Gospel—Socinus's Argument for the Authority of the Holy Scripture—Chandler's Defence of Christianity—Priestley's Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever—Priestley's Evidence of Revealed Religion—These are all works of reputation. Several of them are unanswerable, and all contain more or less matter upon the truth of the Scriptures, that is useful and important.—There is another work which I would recommend to the common reader, because it is so plain, satisfactory, and concise: Jenning's Appeal to Reason and Common Sense for the Truth of the Holy Scriptures. To these may be added, Leland's Deistical Writers—Leslie's Truth of Christianity Demonstrated—and Taylor's Moral Demonstration that the Religion of Jesus Christ is from God—Writings on these subjects of universal importance are very numerous, and it is impossible they can be too much so. It may be questioned whether any objection whatsoever has been made to the great truths of religion and the Sacred Writings, which has not been fairly and honestly answered in one or another of the above authors. But no writer has taken so much pains to state and answer objections to the Scriptures as Stackhouse in his History of the Bible. If the serious reader find himself oppressed with difficulties, he should apply to that work, where he will find them exhibited at length, with such answers as are satisfactory.

It may be recommended to the serious reader to add Knox's Christian Philosophy, where he will find the internal evidence of Christianity insisted on at length. That work, however, does not appear to me to be altogether unexceptionable, though highly valuable. He sets the external and internal evidence of the gospel too much in opposition one to the other. And there is an asperity and superciliousness in his expressions, which ill become the subject on which he writes. It will however do much good by calling the public attention to inward religion.

The purity of the gospel is discussed at length in Newcome's Observations on our Lord's Conduct; Hunter's Observations on the History of Jesus Christ; and Harwood's Life of Christ.

present day? No person ever honestly examined the whole of the evidence for the truth of the New Testament, who did not find it satisfactory. Indeed, the gospel itself is so pure that no decent man can reject it. Hence, it has ever been the custom of unbelievers to attack the corruptions of religion, which more or less prevail in all countries; and, through the sides of those human appendages, to wound the cause of truth itself. These arts, however, are inconsistent with honour, and no person of the least integrity of mind can be capable of them. Modest men too, who have not thoroughly examined the arguments for and against Scripture, will be silent. If they cannot believe in Jesus, they will be extremely cautious upon what ground they reject him. They will remember that Newton examined the evidence of his divine mission, and was satisfied; that Locke examined, and died glorying in his salvation. They will recollect that West, Jenyns, Littleton, and Pringle, were all unbelievers; all undertook, like wise men, to examine the grounds of their infidelity; were all convinced that they had been dangerously mistaken; all became converts to the religion of the Son of God; and all died, declaring their belief in him, and expectations from him. Paine, therefore, and his humble followers, may abuse and misrepresent the facts and doctrines contained in the sacred code, as Bolingbroke, and other deistical, but immoral men, have frequently done, with learning and ability greatly superior; but they only display their own malignity, and want of solid information. It is not every dabbler in science that is qualified, either to vindicate or oppose the Bible with effect. Deep and various learning is necessary for this purpose. The experience of past ages might convince any man, that it will be found hard to kick against the pricks, and to resist the evidence with full satisfaction of mind. All bitter sarcasms, therefore, with which infidels so un-

mercifully load that *best of books*,<sup>(6)</sup> are unbecoming, and should be suspended, lest they recoil upon their own heads. It hath stood the rude shocks of learned Jews and heathens, heretics and unbelievers of former ages, and it is not about to receive its death-wound from the feeble assaults which the present deists are capable of making upon it. We challenge all the unbelievers in christendom to account, upon any merely human principle, for the scriptural prophecies concerning the kingdom of Israel, Judah, and Egypt; or concerning the cities of Tyre, Nineveh, Babylon, and Jerusalem. Nay, we defy any man, on simple human principles, to account for the present state of the Jews. Would we give ourselves time soberly to compare the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy with the history and dispersion of that extraordinary people, we could not fail of having our minds strongly impressed with conviction. This one argument is invincible, and not to be fairly got over by all the wit of man, as Chesterfield was honest enough to declare.

But, if we turn from these prophecies to those which respect human redemption, and the Saviour of mankind, we shall find that they are extremely remarkable and minute, and absolutely conclusive for the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, the son of Mary. We will consider the predictions and fulfilments, and boldly appeal to the common sense of the most prejudiced man upon earth, whether there be not something far beyond the mere powers of nature in these strange coincidences.

It was predicted, many centuries before it came to pass, that Messiah should come into the world for the

(6) For the learning that is now in the world, we are indebted to the Bible. To it likewise, we are indebted for all the morality and religion which prevail among men. Nay, even the absurd tales and fables which we read in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans, are nothing more than perversions of the several histories and characters recorded in the Old Testament.

redemption of human beings.—Messiah did come into the world, four thousand years after the first prediction was uttered.(7)

Messiah is frequently prophesied of under the character of him that was to come.—Jesus Christ is several times described in this form by the writers of the New Testament.(8)

In ancient times there were four monarchies in the world one succeeding another, more famous than all the rest. It was foretold that Messiah should appear under the last of them.—Christ was born after the destruction of the three first, and while the fourth was in all its glory.(9)

Messiah was to come among men before the destruction of the second temple.—Jesus Christ preached in that temple; and it was totally destroyed within forty years afterwards.(60)

Messiah was to come into the world before the dominion of the Jews was taken away.—Christ was born that very year Augustus Cæsar imposed a tax upon

(7) Gen. iii. 15; Is. ix. 6, 7; Mat. i. 18—25. Eveleigh says, "the great object of the prophecies of the Old Testament, is the redemption of mankind. This, as soon as Adam's fall had made it necessary, the mercy of God was pleased to foretell. And, as the time for its accomplishment drew nearer, the predictions concerning it became gradually so clear and determinate, as to mark out with historical precision, almost every circumstance in the life and character of infinitely the most extraordinary personage that ever appeared among men. Any one of these predictions is sufficient to indicate a prescience more than human. But the collective force of all, taken together, is such, that nothing more can be necessary to prove the interposition of Omnicience, than the establishment of their authenticity. And this, even at so remote a period as the present, is placed beyond all doubt."

(8) Compare Hab. ii. 3, 5; Psalm cxvii. 26; Is. xxxv. 4; lix. 20; lxii. 11; Dan. ix. 26; Zech ix. 9; Mal. iii. 1; Matth. xi. 3; John i. 30; iv. 25; xi. 27; Acts xix. 4.

(9) Compare Daniel ii. and vii. with Luke ii. and iii.

(60) Compare Haggai ii. 7, with Matthew xxi. 29.

the Jewish nation, as a token of their subjection to the Roman government.(1)

When Messiah should make his appearance among men, it was to be a time of general peace, after dreadful wars and convulsions.—When Jesus Christ came into the world the Roman wars were just terminated, and the temple of Janus was shut, and universal peace reigned through the empire.(2)

Messiah was to make his appearance among men, at a time when there should be a general expectation of him. When Jesus Christ came into the world, all nations were looking for the advent of some extraordinary person.(3)

Messiah was to have existed with God before the foundations of the world were laid.—Jesus Christ was in the beginning with God, and by him the worlds were made.(4)

(1) Compare Genesis xlix. 10, with Luke ii. 1—7.

(2) Compare Haggai ii. 6, 7, 9, with the Roman History of this period.

(3) Compare Haggai ii. 7—9, with Matthew ii. 1—10, and John i. 19—45.

The Heathens, as well as the Jews, had a firm persuasion, that some extraordinary person would arise in the world about the time of our Saviour's birth. Suetonius says, "There was an old and fixed opinion all over the east, that it was decreed by heaven, that about that time some person from Judea should obtain the dominion over all."

Tacitus mentions the same prophecy, and almost in the same words:—"Most of the Jews had a persuasion, that it was contained in the ancient books of their priests, that at that very time, the east should grow powerful, and some person from Judea should gain the dominion."

To these testimonies of the Scriptures and heathen writers we may add that of Josephus; "that which chiefly excited the Jews to the war against the Romans, was a dubious oracle, found in their Sacred Writings, that about that time, one of them from their parts should reign over the world."

See this subject explained at large by Leslie, in his Short and Easy Method with the Jews, and in his truth of Christianity demonstrated.

(4) Compare Proverbs viii. 22, 23, with John i. 1—3; Colossians i. 16, 17.

Messiah was to be one, who had been the fellow, the equal, and the companion of the Almighty.—Jesus Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and was with him from all eternity.(5)

Messiah was to be the Son of God.—Jesus Christ was confessedly the only-begotten Son of God.(6)

Messiah was to have had an eternal and ineffable generation.—Jesus Christ was the Son of God, prior to his being born of the virgin Mary, in a way not to be explained by mortal man.(7)

Messiah was also to be the Son of Man.—Jesus Christ sustained this character, and seemed to have a pleasure in being called by that name.(8)

Messiah was not to be born according to the ordinary course of nature, but to descend from a pure virgin. Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary.(9)

Messiah was to be the son of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God.—Jesus Christ was sprung from that illustrious patriarch.(70)

Messiah was to be the son of Isaac, and not of Ishmael.(1)—Jesus Christ was sprung from Isaac, and not from Ishmael.

Messiah was to be the son of Jacob, and not of Esau.—Jesus Christ did descend from Jacob, and not from his brother Esau.(2)

(5) Compare Zechariah xiii. 7, with Phil. ii. 6, and John i. 1.

(6) Compare Psalm ii. 12; Proverbs xxx. 4; Hosea xi. 1; Matthew iii. 17; xvii. 5.

(7) Compare Micah v. 2, with John i. 1.

(8) Daniel vii. 13; Matthew viii. 20.

(9) Compare Genesis iii. 15; Isaiah vii. 14; and Jeremiah xxxi. 22; with Matthew i. 22, 23.—The opposers of the supernatural incarnation of our Saviour should soberly read Clark's Discourse on the Miraculous Birth of Christ. My Essay on the Authority of the New Testament may be consulted, especially the Addenda.

(70) Compare Genesis xxi. 1—12, with Matthew i. 1—16.

(1) Compare Genesis xxii. 16—21, with Matthew i. 1—16.

(2) Compare Genesis xxv. 24—34; xxvii. 27—28; xxviii. 13, 14; with Matthew i. 1—16.

Jacob had twelve sons. Messiah was not to spring from any other of the twelve, but from Judah.—Jesus Christ claimed Judah as his ancestor in a direct line.(3)

Messiah was to be sprung from Jesse, the father of David, king of Israel.—Jesus Christ was his descendant.(4)

Jesse had eight sons. David was the youngest. From none of the seven elder, but from David alone, was Messiah to derive his origin.—Jesus Christ was the son of David.(5)

Messiah was to be born in a poor and mean condition, when the family should be reduced to a very low estate.—Jesus Christ, both on his father and mother's side, was of very low and mean appearance, though descended from such illustrious ancestors.(6)

Messiah was to have a messenger going before him, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.—Christ had a messenger going before him, who fully bare witness to his pretensions.(7)

The forerunner of Messiah, was either to be Elijah himself, or one in the spirit of Elijah.—John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, was altogether in the spirit of that great prophet.(8)

The forerunner of Messiah was to preach in the wilderness, and to prepare the minds of the people for his coming.—John the Baptist did preach in the wilderness of Judea, and professed himself to be sent to prepare the Jews for the advent of Christ.(9)

(3) Compare Genesis xlix. 8—12, with Matthew i. 1—16.

(4) Compare Isaiah xi. 1, with Matthew i. 1—16.

(5) Compare 1 Samuel xvi. 1—13; 2 Samuel vii. 12—15; Psalm lxxxix. 19—37; Matthew i. 1—16.

(6) Compare Isaiah liii. 2; Luke i. 48, 52; ii. 7, 24.

(7) Compare Malachi iii. 17 with John i. 19—34, and iii. 26—36.

(8) Compare Malachi iv. 5, 6, with Mark i. 1—8.

(9) Compare Isaiah xl. 3—5, with Matthew iii. 1—6.

The forerunner of Messiah was to be considerably successful in his office.—John the Baptist was treated with great respect by his countrymen, and made large numbers of disciples.(80)

Messiah was not to be born at Jerusalem, the capital of his kingdom, but at Bethlehem, an obscure country village.—Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem, by a very peculiar providence.(1)

Messiah was to go down into Egypt, and to be called out from thence.—Jesus Christ went down into Egypt, soon after his birth, and was called out from thence by an angel of the Lord.(2)

Messiah was to be a preacher of the law of God to his countrymen in the great congregation.—Jesus Christ was indefatigable in his ministrations, both in the temple, and in all other places, where the people were disposed to hear him.(3)

The tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali were first to be greatly distressed, and afterwards highly honoured and exalted, by the appearance of Messiah among them.—These tribes principally suffered in the first Assyrian invasion under Tiglath Pilezer, and were afterwards among the first that enjoyed the blessing of Christ's preaching the gospel, and exhibiting his miraculous works among them.(4)

Messiah was to converse and preach the gospel in the region of Galilee. Jesus Christ lived and conversed so long in that obscure and despicable part of the land of Israel, that he was, by way of contempt, denominated a Galilean.(5)

(80) Compare Isaiah xi. 3—5, with Luke iii. 21.

(1) Compare Micah v. 2, with Matthew ii. 2.

(2) Compare Hosea xi. 1, with Matthew ii. 13—23.

(3) Compare Psalm xi. 9, 10, with the four gospels.

(4) Compare Isaiah ix. 1—4; 2 Kings xv. 29; 1 Chron. v. 26, and Matt. iv. 12—16

(5) Compare Isaiah ix. 1, 2, with Matthew ii. 22, 23; and Matthew iv. 23—25.

Messiah was to have a temple to which he should come, when he made his appearance in human flesh.—Jesus Christ as the Son of God, claimed the temple of Jerusalem as his own, in a sense no mere mortal could presume.(6)

Messiah was to be the Servant of God, whose name is the Branch.—Jesus Christ was emphatically the Servant of God, and the Day-Spring from on high.(7)

Messiah is spoken of by the ancient prophets under the characters of an angel—a messenger—a redeemer—an interpreter—one of a thousand—a plant of renown—a captain—the beloved of God—the true David.—Jesus Christ was all of these, and whatever else was peculiar to the character of that august Being; as will more fully appear from the following instances(8)

Messiah was to be the messenger of the covenant between God and his people.—Jesus Christ was that messenger.(9)

Messiah was to sustain the office of a prophet, when he came to redeem mankind.—Jesus Christ sustained that office in all its extent.(10)

Messiah was also to sustain the office of a priest when he appeared upon earth.—Jesus Christ was a

(6) Compare Malachi iii. 1, with Luke ii. 49; and Matthew xxi. 12, 13.

(7) Compare Isaiah iv. 2; xi. 1; Jeremiah xxiii. 5; Zechariah iii. 8; vi. 12; Isaiah xlvi. 1; Matthew xii. 18; and Luke i. 78.—The word translated Branch signifies also the East, or Day-Spring.

(8) Compare Genesis xlvi. 16; xxxiii. 24—30; Hosea xii. 3, 4; Ex. xxii. 20—23; Malachi iii. 1; Job xix. 25; xxxiii. 23; Ez. xxxiv. 23, 24, 29; Joshua v. 13, 14; Isaiah xlvi. 1; Rev. i. 1; Matthew iii. 17; Hebrews ii. 10.

(9) Compare Jeremiah xxxiii. 20, 21; Malachi iii. 1; Isaiah lxiii. 9; Hebrews viii. 7—13; x. 9; xiii. 20, 21.

(10) Compare Deuteronomy xviii. 15, 18; Acts iii. 22; Luke xxiv. 29; Matthew xxiv.

Priest, and offered, not indeed the blood of bullocks, and of goats, but his own most precious blood.(1)

Messiah, though a priest, was not to be of the tribe of Levi, and after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedeck.—Jesus Christ was of the tribe of Judah, and had an everlasting priesthood, after the order of Melchizedeck.(2)

Messiah was, moreover, to sustain the office of a king, when he took on him human nature for the salvation of his elect.—Jesus Christ was a King, even while upon earth; and, now that he is in heaven, his dominion extends over all worlds.(3)

Messiah was to be a righteous king, and emphatically the Prince of Peace.—Jesus Christ was eminently distinguished as a righteous person, and the great Peace-Maker both on earth and in heaven.(4)

The kingdom of Messiah was to be universal and everlasting.—Jesus Christ has a kingdom, that, in due time, shall be universal in its extent, and eternal in its duration.(5)

Messiah was to be the Sun of Righteousness, who should arise upon the world with salvation in his rays. Jesus Christ was the Light of the world, who illuminateth every man that cometh into it.

Messiah was also to be the East, or Morning Star.—Jesus Christ is called the Day-Spring from on high, and the bright and Morning-Star.(6)

(1) Compare Zechariah vi. 13; Hebrews ix. 11—14.

(2) Compare Genesis xiv. 18; Psalm cx. 4; Hebrews vi. 20; vii. 1—28.

(3) Compare Psalm ii. 6; Zechariah vi. 13; ix. 9; with Luke i. 32, 33; John xxiii. 36, 37; and Rev. xix. 16.

(4) Compare Isaiah xxxiii. 1; Psalm xlv. 1—17; lxxii. 1—19; Jeremiah xxiii. 5; Zechariah ix. 9; Isaiah ix. 6; Luke ii. 14; Eph. ii. 4—22.

(5) Daniel v i. 27; Luke i. 32, 33; Rev. v. 12—14.

(6) Compare Malachi iv. 2; John i. 5, 9; viii. 12; ix. 5; xii. 35,—46; Is. ix. 1, 2; Luke i. 78; and Rev. xxii. 16.

Messiah was to be emphatically the Just-One—Jesus Christ not only answered the description, but is repeatedly called by that name.(7)

Messiah, to whom belonged the land of Judea, was to be denominated Emmanuel.—Jesus Christ was the proprietor of that holy land, and was expressly called by the name of Emmanuel.(8)

Messiah was to be a great Shepherd, and to lay down his life for the sheep.—Jesus Christ was the great and good Shepherd, and shed his blood in defence of his flock.(9)

Messiah was not only to be a righteous King, and execute judgment and justice in the earth; but his name was to be Jehovah our Righteousness.—Jesus Christ is made of God righteousness to every one that believes in his name.(100)

Messiah was to be, like the lion, which is the king of animals, of a noble and generous spirit.—Jesus Christ was the Lion of the tribe of Judah.(1)

Messiah was to be anointed with the Holy Ghost, in a larger degree than any other man ever was.—Jesus Christ was favoured in this respect beyond all other persons that ever lived.(2)

Messiah was to be of a meek and lowly disposition, humbling himself for the redemption of the world.—Jesus Christ was meek and lowly in mind, and answered the prophetic description in every respect,(3)

(7) 2 Samuel xxiii. 3; Isaiah xi. 5; Acts iii. 14; vii. 52; xxii. 14.

(8) Compare Isaiah vii. 14; viii. 8; Matthew i. 23; and John i. 11.

(9) Compare Zechariah xiii. 7; Isaiah lx. 11; and Ez. xxxiv. 23, 24; with John x. 1—18.

(100) Compare Jeremiah xxiii. 5, 6, with 1 Corinthians i. 30.

(1) Compare Genesis xl ix. 9; and Rev. v. 5.

(2) Compare Psalm xlv. 7, with Matthew iii. 16, 17; and John iii. 34.

(3) Compare Zechariah ix. 9; Matthew xi. 28, 29; John xiii. 14—17; 2 Corinthians viii. 9.

Messiah was to teach mankind the doctrines of salvation, without ostentation and noise.—Jesus Christ was quiet and unambitious in his public, as well as private deportment.(4)

Messiah was to be endowed with a peculiar degree of wisdom and understanding.—Jesus Christ, his enemies being judges, spake as never man spake, and taught a more pure and excellent doctrine, than ever had been received among mankind before.(5)

The doctrine of Messiah was to be of the most healing, encouraging and consolatory kind.—The doctrine of Jesus Christ was singularly adapted to the healing of wounded minds.(6)

The doctrine which Messiah should preach, was to have a powerfully transforming influence upon the minds of men.—The gospel of Christ had all this effect upon the dispositions and conduct of every one of his genuine disciples.(7)

Messiah was to be peculiarly kind and affectionate to young, distressed, and tender-spirited persons.—Jesus Christ was singularly attentive to all such characters.(8)

In confirmation of his divine mission, Messiah was to display many wonderful works among the people.—Jesus Christ wrought abundance of miracles in confirmation of his pretensions, and the doctrines which he taught.(9)

(4) Compare Isaiah xlii. 1—4; Matthew xii. 14—21.

(5) Compare Isaiah xi. 1—5; John vii. 46; Matthew xiii. 54—58; Matthew v. vi. and vii. ch.

(6) Compare Isaiah lxi. 1—3; Matthew xi. 28—30, John xiv. 1—3.

(7) Compare Isaiah xi. 6—8; with Acts ii. 41—47.

(8) Compare Isaiah xl. 11; iv. 1—3; lxi. 1—3; Matthew xii. 20; and Mark x. 13—16.

(9) Compare Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6; with Matthew viii. and ix. chapters, and John xxi. 25.

Messiah was to have but little success in preaching the gospel among his countrymen the Jews.—Jesus Christ was almost universally rejected by them.(10)

The minds of the Jews were to be so veiled that they should not know their Messiah when he came among them.—The minds of the Jews were so sealed up, and enveloped in prejudice against Jesus Christ when he appeared, that he was treated by them as an impostor and deceiver.(1)

Messiah was to be the chief corner stone in the building of his church, elect, precious.—Jesus Christ was the chief corner stone, elect, and precious.(2)

Messiah was to be rejected by the builders, but yet made the head stone in the corner.—Jesus Christ was almost universally rejected by the great men of his nation; but yet he was made both Lord and Christ.(3)

Messiah was to preach the gospel to the poor, and to be embraced by a considerable number of that description.—Jesus Christ preached the gospel to the poor, and various of that rank believed in his name.(4)

Messiah was to be despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.—Jesus Christ was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.(5)

Messiah was to be seen riding into Jerusalem, sitting upon a young ass, as a token of the humility of his mind.—Jesus Christ answered this prediction, as

(10) Compare Isaiah liii. 1; xljx. 4; Rom. x. 1—3, 21.

(1) Compare Isaiah vi. 9—13; xxix. 9—14; 2 Cor. iii. 5—18.

(2) Compare Isaiah xxviii. 16; Acts iv. 11, 12; 1 Peter ii. 6—8.

(3) Compare Psalm cxviii. 22; Isaiah viii. 13, 14; John vii. 48; Matthew xi. 25, 26; 1 Corinthians i. 26—31; 1 Peter ii. 7, 8.

(4) Isaiah lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18; Matthew xi. 5; James ii. 5.

(5) Compare Isaiah liii. with Matthew xxvi. and xxvii. ch. and Phil. ii. 8, 9.

well as every other that went before concerning him in the most minute circumstance.(6)

When the Messiah should enter Jerusalem in this meek and humble manner, great crowds of the common people should welcome him with shouts and rejoicings.—When Jesus Christ rode into that proud metropolis in low disguise, the general cry of the mob was, Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: hosanna in the highest.

Messiah was to be actuated with such a burning zeal for the house of God, as even to be endangered by it.—Jesus Christ displayed that zeal upon various occasions.(7)

Messiah was to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies by the treachery of an intimate friend.—Christ was betrayed by one of the disciples whom he had chosen.(8)

Messiah was to be sold for thirty pieces of silver.—Jesus Christ was sold for the sum predicted.(9)

Messiah's price, the thirty pieces of silver, was to be cast to the potter in the house of the Lord.—All this was done when Judas betrayed his master.(20)

Messiah was to be condemned in judgment, and suffer death under the colour of public justice.—Jesus Christ underwent a mock trial, was declared innocent by his very judge, and yet delivered over to be crucified,(1)

The followers of Messiah were all to forsake him in the time of his greatest need.—When Jesus Christ

(6) Compare Zechariah ix, with Matthew xxi. 1—11.

(7) Compare Psalm lxxix. 9; John ii. 17.

(8) Compare Psalm xli. 9; iv. 12, 13; Mat. xxvi. 47—50.

(9) Compare Zechariah xi. 12; Matthew xxvi. 14—16.

(20) Compare Zechariah xi. 13; Matthew xxvii. 3—10.

(1) Compare Isaiah lix. 8, 9; Matthew xxvii. chapter.

was apprehended, and put upon his trial, all his disciples forsook him and fled.(2)

Messiah was to finish his public employment, in confirming the covenant, in about three years and a half,—Jesus Christ began his public office at thirty years of age, and was put to death at thirty three and a half.(3)

Messiah was to be ignominiously scourged by his persecutors.—Jesus Christ was treated in this manner.(4)

Messiah was to be smitten on the face in the day of his humiliation.—Jesus Christ was basely buffeted by the hands of vile slaves.(5)

Messiah was to have his face bespattered with spittle.—Jesus Christ condescended for our sakes, even to this indignity, without complaining.(6)

Messiah was to be wounded in his hands, even by his own friends.—Jesus Christ had his hands nailed to the cursed tree by his own countrymen.(7)

Messiah was to be so marred and disfigured in his visage by the ill treatment he should receive, that his friends would scarce know him.—And was not Jesus Christ so disfigured and despoiled?(8)

(2) Compare Zechariah xiii. 7; Isaiah lxiii. 5; Matthew xxvi. 56.

(3) Compare Daniel ix. 27, with the period of our Lord's ministry in the four gospels.

(4) Compare Isaiah l. 6, with Matthew xxvii. 26.

(5) Compare Isaiah l. 6; lli. 14; Micah v. 1; and Matthew xxvi. 67.

(6) Compare Isaiah l. 6; Matthew xxv. 67.

(7) Compare Zechariah xiii. 6, with John xx. 27.

(8) Compare Isaiah lii. 14, with Matthew xxvii. 29, 30.—If it should be objected that several of these circumstances are trifling and unworthy of the spirit of prophecy to reveal, it may be answered, that "The more minute some of these circumstances are in themselves, the greater and more convincing is the evidence of

Messiah was to be oppressed and afflicted, and yet not open his mouth in complaint. He was to be brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he was not to open his mouth.—Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, before Pilate held his peace. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.(9)

Messiah was to be taken up with wicked men in his death.—Christ was suspended on a cross between two thieves.(30)

divine fore-knowledge in the prediction of them; because the conformity between the prediction and the history is so much the more circumstantial."

(9) Compare Isaiah liii. 7, with Matthew xxvi. 63, and xxvii. 12—14.

(30) Compare Isaiah liii. 9, with Matthew xxvii. 38,—60.

A comparison of the 53d chapter of Isaiah, with the account given in the four Evangelists of the sufferings of Christ, was the instrument of convincing the witty and wicked Rochester. The narrative by Burnet is worth inserting in this place:—Rochester said to Burnet, "Mr. Parsons, in order to his conviction, read to him the 53d chapter of Isaiah, and compared that with our Saviour's passion, that he might there see a prophesy concerning it, written many ages before it was done; which the Jews that blasphemed Jesus Christ, still kept in their hands as a book divinely inspired. He said to me—That, as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him, which so enlightened his mind, and convinced him, that he could resist it no longer; for the words had an authority, which did shoot like rays or beams in his mind, so that he was not only convinced by the reasonings he had about it, which satisfied his understanding, but by a power, which did so effectually constrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour, as if he had seen him in the clouds. He had made it to be read so often to him, that he had got it by heart; and went through a great part of it in discourse with me, with a sort of heavenly pleasure, giving me his reflections upon it. Some few I remember: Who hath believed our report? Here, he said, was foretold the opposition the gospel was to meet with from such wretches as he was. He hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him, there was no beauty, that we should desire him.—On this he said, the meanness of his appearance and person has made vain and foolish people disparage him, because he came not in such a fool's coat as they delight in."

Messiah was to be buried in the sepulchre of a rich man.—Christ was buried in the tomb of a rich counsellor.

Messiah was to be put to death at the end of 490 years, from the time a commandment should go forth to restore and to build Jerusalem.—Now it is remarkable, that from the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia, from whom Ezra received his commission, ch. vii. 8, to the death of Jesus Christ, there are just 490 years.(1)

Messiah was to be presented by his enemies with vinegar and gall during his sufferings.—In this manner was Jesus Christ treated as he hung upon the cross.(2)

The persecutors of Messiah were to pierce his hands and his feet.—So did the bloody Jews and Romans treat the Redeemer of mankind.(3)

The enemies of the Messiah were to laugh him to scorn, and taunt and reproach him with satirical language.—So did the Jews conduct themselves towards Christ in the day of his distress.(4)

When Messiah was put to death, his enemies were to part his garments among them, and for his vesture they were to cast lots.—When Christ was crucified, these transactions took place.(5)

When the Messiah should suffer death, not a bone of his body was to be broken.—When Christ was crucified, not a bone of him was injured.(6)

(1) Daniel ii. 24.

(2) Compare Psalm lxix. 21, with Matthew xxvii. 34, and John xix. 28—30.

(3) Compare Psalm xxii. 16, with Matthew xxvii. 35.—Crucifixion was a thing not known among the Jews in the time of David, nor for many ages afterwards.

(4) Compare Psalm xxii. 7, 8, with Matthew xxvii. 39—44.

(5) Compare Psalm xxii. 18, with Matthew xxvii. 35.

(6) Compare Exodus xii. 45, and Numbers ix. 12, with John xvi. 31—36.

When Messiah should be put to death, his side was by some means not declared, to be pierced.—When Jesus Christ was crucified, his side was pierced with a spear.(7)

It was prophesied of Messiah, that he should make intercession for transgressors.—Jesus Christ interceded with God for his very murderers, and now ever liveth at his Father's right hand, to plead the cause of the sinful children of men.(8)

Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself.—Jesus Christ, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners, was cut off by the hands of wicked men, to reconcile God to his rebellious creatures.(9)

When Messiah should come, there was to be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and uncleanness.—When Christ came, he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and by the shedding of his blood once for all.(40)

Messiah was to make atonement for the iniquities, transgressions and sins of the world.—Jesus Christ was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.(1)

Messiah was to make this atonement in the last of Daniel's seventy weeks.—Jesus Christ was crucified in that very week.(2)

(7) Compare Zechariah xii. 10, with John xix. 34, 37.

(8) Compare Isaiah liii. 12; Hebrews vii. 25.

(9) Compare Daniel ix. 26; Isaiah liii. 8; Matthew xxvi. and xxvii. chapters.

(40) Compare Zechariah xiii. 1; and Hebrews ix. and x. chapters.

(1) Compare Isaiah liii. 5; Daniel ix. 24; 1 John ii. 1, 2.

(2) Daniel ix. 27. "The doctrine of atonement is that which, together with the principles on which it is founded, and the consequences naturally flowing from it, distinguishes the Christian religion, from all other religions whatever."

"It is, without dispute, the great distinguishing character of the Christian dispensation, the wall of partition between natu-

Messiah was to abolish the old, and introduce a new dispensation.—Jesus Christ abolished the ceremonies of the law of Moses, and brought in a more perfect and rational economy.(3)

The blood of Messiah was to be the blood of the covenant, which should bring prisoners out of the pit where there is no water.—The blood of Jesus Christ was the blood of the new covenant dispensation, which whoever disregards, shall bear the blame for ever.(4)

Messiah was not to lie in the grave and be turned to corruption like other men.—Jesus Christ did not continue in the grave, nor did he see corruption like the rest of mankind.(5)

Messiah was to be raised from the grave on the third day after his interment.—Jesus Christ was buried on the Friday, and rose from the dead on the Sunday-morning following.(6)

When Messiah should arise from the dead, he was to bring some tokens with him of his victory over the infernal powers.—When Jesus Christ entered the state of the dead, he led captivity captive, unloosed the bands of death, and raised many bodies of the saints, which were confined under his dominion.(7)

Messiah was to ascend up into heaven, and reign there at his Father's right hand, invested with universal dominion.—Jesus Christ did ascend up into heaven in the sight of many witnesses, and took his

“ral and revealed religion, the main foundation of all our hopes of pardon and acceptance hereafter.”

(3) Compare Jeremiah xxxi. 31—34, with Hebrews viii. 6—13.

(4) Compare Zechariah ix. 11, with Hebrews x. 29; xiii. 20.

(5) Compare Psalm xvi. 10, with Matthew xxviii. 6.

(6) Compare Hosea vi. 2; Matthew xx. 19; Matthew xxviii. 1—7; 1 Corinthians xv. 4.

(7) Compare Psalm lxviii. 18, with Matthew xxvii. 52.

place at the right hand of power, invested with universal dominion.(8)

When Messiah ascended into heaven, his ascension was to be attended with the ministers of heaven, to usher him into his Father's presence.—When Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven, two men stood by the apostles in white apparel, and addressed them on the joyful occasion.(9)

Messiah was to send down from heaven the gift of the Holy Ghost, as a token and pledge that he was exalted, and that his Father was pleased with what he had done upon earth for the redemption of his people.—Jesus Christ sent down the gift of the Holy Ghost, in the most conspicuous and miraculous manner.(50)

(8) Compare Psalm xvi. 11; lxviii. 18; Isaiah ix. 6, 7; Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 9; and Matthew xxviii. 18.

"All things which the prophets had foretold concerning the Messiah, were punctually made good in the person, and actions, and sufferings of our Saviour."

(9) Compare Daniel vii. 13, 14 with Acts i. 10, 11.

(50) Compare Psalm lxviii. 18; Joel ii. 28—32, with Acts ii. 1—4, and Ep. iv. 8—12.

"When our Lord, after his resurrection, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, had expounded unto his apostles in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself, and opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scripture; then they saw plainly, and any one now, who will trace the whole thread of the Old Testament, may plainly see, that there is a continued series of connexion, one uniform analogy and design, carried on for many ages by Divine prescience, through a succession of prophecies; which, as in their proper centre, do all meet together in Christ, and in him only; however the single lines, when considered apart, may many of them be imagined to have another direction, and point to intermediate events. Nothing is more evident, than that the whole succession of prophecies can possibly be applied to none but Christ. Nothing is more miraculous, than that they should all of them be capable of being, possibly applied to him. And whatever intermediate deliverances or deliverers of God's people may, seemingly or really be spoken of upon particular occasions; nothing is more reasonable than to believe, in the apostle's certainty, who conversed personally with our Lord after his resurrection, nothing could be more reasonable than to believe,

The doctrine of Messiah was to begin to be preached at Jerusalem, and from thence to spread itself through the nations.—The gospel of Christ was first preached in that city, and actually dispersed itself through all the neighbouring countries in the course of a few years.(1)

Though Messiah was to be generally rejected and despised in his life-time; after his death the pleasure of the Lord, in the conversion and salvation of mankind, was to prosper in his hand.—How exactly these circumstances agree with the history of Jesus Christ, is well known to every christian.(2)

The followers of the Messiah should meet with great and severe trials and persecution, for their adherence to his cause.—The followers of Jesus Christ had the whole world in arms against them for several ages.(3)

The rejecters of Messiah should be rejected of God, and his followers called by another name.—The Jews, who would not have Christ to rule over them, were rejected by him, and his followers were called by another name, through divine appointment, as it should seem, to accomplish the prophecy.(4)

Messiah was to be opposed by kings, and persons in authority, with great vigour and resolution.—Jesus Christ was very generally opposed, through the whole

that the ultimate and general view of the prophetic spirit always was fixed on him, of whom, in some of the ancient prophecies it is expressly affirmed, that God's servant David shall be the prince over his people for ever; that his dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

(1) Compare Isaiah ii. 1—4; Micah iv. 1—4; with Acts 2d chapter, and Romans x. 18.

(2) Isaiah lxi. 10—12.

(3) Compare Isalath lxvi. 5, and Malachi iii. 1—3, with Matthew x. 16—18, and 1 Corinthians iv. 9.

(4) Compare Isaiah lxii. 2; lxv. 15, with Acts xi. 26.

of his public ministry, by the great ones of the world, and all the power of the Roman empire was in opposition to his cause and people, for upwards of three hundred years.(5)

Notwithstanding the opposition of the kings and princes of the world for a season, the time was to come when kings should be nursing fathers to the church, and queens nursing mothers.—Most of the governors of the nations of Europe have been protectors of the church of Christ now for many centuries.(6)

It was upon a great variety of occasions predicted, that Messiah should enlighten the Gentile nations with the knowledge of the true God.—Jesus Christ gave particular commandment to his apostles, no longer to confine their ministrations to the Jews, as he had done during his life-time; but to go out into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.(7)

Messiah was to destroy the face of the covering which was cast over all people, and the veil which was spread over all nations.—When Jesus Christ appeared, he, by his word, Spirit, and apostles, enlightened the minds of men, and effected a most surprising change in all the nations where his gospel was received.(8)

To Messiah every knee was to bow, every tongue to swear, and every heart to submit.—The whole christian world, professedly at least, pay this obedience to Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of souls, and to no other being whatever. And in due time, all opposing power shall be everlastinglly annihilated.(9)

(5) Compare Psalm ii. 2; cx. 5, 6; Luke xxiii. 8—12.

(6) Isaiah xl ix. 23; lx. iii.

(7) Compare Isaiah lx. with Mark xvi. 15.

(8) Compare Isaiah xxv. 7; Acts ii. 1—11; xxvi. 17, 18.

(9) Compare Psalm cx. 1; Isaiah xlv. 25; 1 Corinthians xv. 24—28; and Philippians ii. 10, 11.

It was predicted, that all the enemies of Messiah should be ashamed and confounded.—Jesus Christ has already made an awful example of his enemies, the Jews; first, in the destruction of their city and temple; secondly, in their present dispersion; and, in proper season, every opposing power shall be brought into subjection.(60)

It was predicted, that Messiah would make a great and visible difference between his believing and unbelieving countrymen.—When the Romans besieged Jerusalem, near two millions of unbelieving Jews perished, while every single believer fled out of the city, and escaped in safety, to the mountains.(1)

Messiah was to appear in the world at the consummation of the ages, to raise mankind from the dead, and judge the human race in righteousness.—Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, shall appear again at the close of nature, and decide the final fates both of men and angels.(2)

Messiah was to destroy death itself, triumph over the grave, and create new heavens and a new earth, wherein should dwell universal righteousness.—Jesus Christ is he who alone is equal to the mighty undertaking, and is divinely appointed to that office.(3)

This is a concise view of the predictions contained in the Old Testament, concerning the nature, birth, life, doctrine, suffering, death, resurrection, ascen-

(60) Compare Psalm ii. 9; Psalm cx. 1; Isaiah xlv. 24; liv. 17; ix. 12; with Matthew xxiv. 2 Thes. i. 7—9; and the History of the Jews.

(1) Compare Malachi 3d and 4th chapters, with the History of that remarkable Siege.

(2) Compare Job xix. 23—27; Isaiah xxv. 8; Daniel xii. 1—8; Hosea xiii. 14; Micah ii. 13; Matthew xxv. 31—49; John xi. 25; Acts xvii. 30, 31; 1 Corinthians vi. 3; 2 Corinthians v. 10.

(3) Compare Hosea xiii. 14; Isaiah lxv. 17; lxvi. 22; 1 Corinthians xv. 54, 55; Revelations xx. 14; xxi. 4.

sion, and kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt respecting the priority of the predictions to the birth of Christ, because it is well known by every person, that the Old Testament was translated out of the Hebrew into the Greek language, and dispersed over the world, many years before Christ came; and that the latest of the predictions was upwards of three centuries before the birth of the Redeemer of mankind. Such a variety of circumstances, therefore, predicted concerning one man, so many years before he was born, of so extraordinary a nature, and under such convulsions and revolutions of civil government, all accomplished by Christ, and in no other person that ever appeared in the world, point him out, with irresistible evidence, as the Saviour of mankind.

But let any man who is sceptically inclined, take the fifty-second and fifty-third chapters of Isaiah, and compare them seriously with the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters of Matthew's gospel, and then let him deny, if he can, that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah. Rochester, and many others have made the experiment, and have found it the power of God unto the conviction of their minds, and the salvation of their souls. That all these extremely minute circumstances of time, place, character, &c. should concenter in Jesus Christ, and in no other person, is truly remarkable, and absolutely demonstrative of his Messiahship. That he should be born at such a time, in such a place, and under circumstances of poverty; that he should suffer, and be opposed by those that were strangers to his character, and be finally put to an ignominious death: these things were all common to him with many more of our fellow creatures. But that he should profess to be the Saviour of mankind—that he should be described as one that was to come—be born under the fourth monarchy—while the second temple was yet standing—before the dominion of the

Jews was entirely taken away—in a time of profound and universal peace—when there was a general expectation of some extraordinary person:—that he should have existed with God before the foundations of the world were laid—been the companion of the Almighty—been sprung from the Deity by an ineffable generation—been the Son of God—The Son of man—begotten of a pure virgin by divine energy—that he should be the son of Abraham—Isaac—Jacob—Judah—Jesse—David—born in a mean condition—yet having an illustrious herald preceding him—in the spirit of Elijah preaching, not in Jerusalem, but in the wilderness—and successful in his office:—that he should be born in Bethlehem—go down into Egypt—be a preacher of the gospel—exercise his ministry in Galilee—in the neighbourhood of Zebulon and Naphtali—yet be proprietor of the temple in Jerusalem:—that he should be the servant of God, whose name is the Branch—a Plant of Renown—the Messenger of the Covenant—a Prophet—a Priest; not of the tribe of Levi, and after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedeck—a King—a Righteous King—the Prince of Peace—having an universal and everlasting kingdom:—that he should be the Son of Righteousness—the East—the Just One—Emmanuel—the Shepherd—Jehovah our righteousness—the Lion of the tribe of Judah:—that he should be anointed, not with oil to his offices, but with the Holy Ghost:—that he should be of a most meek, patient, humble disposition—teaching mankind the doctrines of salvation without pomp and noise—endowed with a peculiar degree of wisdom and understanding—and speaking the most healing words to tender minds and afflicted consciences—changing thereby all the powers of the soul:—that he should confirm the reality of his mission and the divinity of his doctrine, by a variety of benevolent miracles—and yet that the principal persons among his countrymen should not submit to his pre-

tensions—be the chief corner stone of his church, and, notwithstanding, be rejected by the builders, though embraced by many of the common people:—that he should be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—be seen riding in humble triumph into the capital of his kingdom—the people crying hosanna to the son of David:—that his zeal for the honour of God should transport him almost to excess:—that he should be betrayed by a friend—sold for thirty pieces of silver—that these pieces should be thrown down in the temple—and applied to the purchase of a Potter's field:—that he should be condemned in judgment—forsaken by all his friends in his greatest need—finish his public office in three years and a half—be ignominiously scourged—smitten on the face—befouled with spittle—wounded in his hands—by his friends—marred and disfigured in his countenance—patient and silent under all his ill-treatment—suspended with wicked men—buried in the tomb of a rich man—put to death exactly at the end of 490 years from a particular period—presented with vinegar and gall—wounded in his hands and feet—laughed to scorn under his sufferings:—that his garment should be parted among his keepers:—that lots should be cast for his seamless vesture:—under all his distresses that not a bone of his body should be broken:—that his side should be pierced:—that he should make intercession for transgressors—be cut off, though innocent:—that a fountain should be opened to wash away sin—atonement made for the iniquities of the world—in the last of Daniel's 70 weeks—the old covenant abolished—a new one introduced—the blood of Messiah being the seal of the covenant:—that, though he should be buried, he should not see corruption—but be raised from the grave on the third day:—that he should bring from the dead some tokens of his victory—ascend into heaven—attended with angels—take his

place at the right hand of God—and send down the Spirit upon his followers :—that the gospel should be first preached in Jerusalem—multitudes converted to the faith—great persecutions endured by those who embraced it—the Jews rejected and the church called by a new name :—that the gospel should be generally opposed by the kings and governors of the world—yet after some time they should become favourable, and give it encouragement :—that the Gentile nations should be enlightened and called :—that every soul should submit to Messiah—those who reject him being confounded—and those who embrace him being protected :—that he should finally be the judge of the world—destroy death—and crown his faithful people with everlasting joy :—that all these things should be predicted of some one person, several hundreds, or even some thousand years asunder from each other ; and that they shall all receive accomplishment in Jesus Christ, without any one exempt case, and in no other person : if under such circumstances, Jesus Christ were not the person intended in the divine councils, and the Messiah, whom all the prophets were inspired to predict, it would be the greatest of miracles. Prophecy would be of no use. All evidence would be rendered precarious, mankind left to roam at large, without any satisfactory guide to direct their steps in pursuit of truth and salvation. We may then say, with unshaken confidence, in the words of Philip to Nathaniel; *We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*

But, if we turn from these prophecies, to those which more immediately respect the condition of the Christian church in these latter days, we shall find they also are extremely remarkable, and absolutely conclusive for the divine authority of the Sacred Writings.

Nebuchadnezzar, invaded the land of Israel about 600 years before the birth of Christ, and carried into captivity a considerable number of the inhabitants of the country. Among others, led captive, were Daniel and his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In the second year of his reign, he had a remarkable dream, which made a strong impression upon his mind, but which he was not able to recollect. He sent for all the wise men of Babylon, and, however unreasonable the injunction, insisted, that they should make known his dream, together with the interpretation thereof, upon pain of death. After some time, the king's determination was revealed unto Daniel. He requested a little respite might be allowed him, before the decree should be put into execution. This being granted, he went to his three religious companions, and desired them to join with him in fasting and prayer, to intreat the Lord to discover unto him the king's dream, and its interpretation. The Lord was intreated by Daniel and his three friends, and the whole matter from first to last, was revealed unto him, to the full satisfaction, and even astonishment of the king. Dan. ii. 1—45. The king was so affected with the wonderful manifestation of his inmost thoughts, that he was quite overcome, forgot his own dignity, and fell into an act of idolatry. Dan. ii. 46—49.

The dream is so distinct, the interpretation of it so satisfactory, and the whole so perfectly conformable to the history of the world, as far as the several ages have hitherto proceeded, that no thoughtful man can help being exceedingly struck with the accuracy of the divine foreknowledge.

The dream itself was the figure of an image in the form of a man, made principally of metal, but yet the metal was of different kinds. The head was of gold. This was an emblematical representation of Nebuchadnezzar, and the Babylonian empire over

which he presided. The breast and the arms of the image were of silver. This was an emblematical representation of the empire of Persia, which was to subvert and succeed the Babylonian. Nebuchadnezzar was, at that time, the most powerful monarch in all the earth, and made Babylon, the capital of his kingdom, the wonder of the world. Within sixty years, however, the empire was overturned, and Babylon itself was taken by Cyrus the great, afterwards king of Persia. The belly and thighs of the image were of brass. This represented a third empire which was to succeed the Babylonian and Persian. Accordingly, about 200 years after the establishment of the Persian empire, Alexander, king of Macedonia, a small state in the upper part of Greece, marched against Darius, king of Persia, defeated him in three pitched battles, and totally subverted the second of the four empires. The Grecian then became the third. The fourth was represented by legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay. This is the Roman; for it was these people, who subdued the four successors of Alexander, and reduced their kingdoms into Roman provinces, and particularly Greece and Macedonia, which were subdued by them 130 years after the conquest of Persia by Alexander the great, and 200 years before the birth of Christ. The Roman empire then was the fourth and the last. It was represented in this image by iron legs, and feet of iron and clay. "Thou sawest," says Daniel to the king, "till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone, that

smote the image, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

The four empires were all to be destroyed, and a fifth was to succeed, which was to be different from all that had gone before it. The fourth too was to be unlike the three former in several respects. The image had iron legs. This implied, that the empire, represented by them, was to be more powerful than any of those which had preceded it. But then the feet and toes of the image were part of iron and part of clay. This was to denote, that the latter ages of the Roman empire were partly strong and partly weak. The ten toes too, upon the feet of the image, were designed to represent ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was to be divided, just as the two feet of a human creature are split into ten ramifications. This is expressed by the prophet in the manner following:—"Whereas thou sawest the feet and the toes, part of potter's clay and part of iron; the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron; forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay; so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." The meaning of which seems to be, the rulers of the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire will be divided, shall form marriages, alliances, and contracts one with another, from time to time, for supporting each others interests; but none of their schemes and alliances for obtaining universal empire shall stand. They shall be broken and come to nought. No universal empire shall ever exist upon earth again, till the spiritual empire of Jesus Christ, over the hearts, minds, souls, consciences, and lives of men takes place. Jesus shall be an universal monarch, and the only universal monarch, who shall ever exist again.

It is not, however, expressly asserted in the prophecy before us, that the Roman empire should be split into ten kingdoms. It is only said, the kingdom shall be divided. But though it is not inserted in so many words, it is strongly intimated by the ten toes of the two feet of the image. And the whole is more fully explained in Daniel's vision, recorded in the seventh chapter, where the beast, which is symbolical of the Roman empire, is represented with ten horns, as here the image with ten toes. And, indeed, it is necessary to the full understanding of this dream of Nebuchadnezzar, that we should compare it with the vision of Daniel, which signifies the same thing under different images, with some additional circumstances. This vision of Daniel was near fifty years after the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. vii. 1—8.

After this, the prophet had a representation of the everlasting Father of the universe, with his eternal Son, the blessed Jesus, passing sentence upon the little horn in these verses. A horn is a symbolical representation of government, power, dominion. The government signified by this little horn was to be utterly destroyed, and Jesus is to erect his universal empire upon the ruins of it. Daniel vii. 9—14. This is the same glorious and universal kingdom of Messiah, which is described in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Compare Dan. ii. 35—44.

When Daniel had beheld the judgment of the little horn, he did not understand the meaning of it. He was, therefore, greatly troubled, and very desirous of knowing what the whole signified. After a little time, he took courage, and went up to one of the glorious beings, who stood by, to inquire. Whereupon the happy spirit, that was in the train of Messiah, laid open to Daniel the outlines of the whole history of the corruptions of the Christian church—their rise—their progress—their amazing enormity—

their subversion—and their total demolition: Dan. vii. 15—28.

These are wonderful predictions(4) in which we are all most nearly concerned; because the awful times of which they speak, we have reason to believe, are just at hand; and none of us know how soon we may be involved in the distresses which are here foretold. The Roman empire was to be broken up, and divided into ten kingdoms. Soon after the formation of these ten kingdoms, which are denominated horns, there was to arise one little horn, one small dominion, underneath, or from behind, three of the ten horns, or kingdoms, into which the empire should be divided. This little horn was to conquer and subdue three of the ten horns, and to usurp their dominion. After this, it was to go on and increase more and more till it had obtained a peculiar kind of power and jurisdiction over all the seven other horns. This one little horn, that was become so great and powerful, was also to grow proud, and vain, and cruel, and bloody, and tyrannical, and idolatrous, and a vile persecutor of the true servants of the living God.

This horribly bloody and tyrannical power, was to be aided and assisted in its cruelties towards the genuine followers of the Lamb, by all the other seven kingdoms, over which it had obtained an unbounded influence. This wicked and cruel dominion, was to continue a time and times and half a time. A time here, in prophetic language, signifies a Jewish year, which consisted of 360 days. The times then will signify twice 360 days; and half a time will signify

(4) The reader will find these, and other predictions of Daniel, explained by Newton in his Dissertations on the Prophecies. Few of our most able writers on the prophecies, however, seem to me to have any idea, that they apply to the Protestant establishments, as well as to the Catholic kingdoms. All these things are against us, and we are usually extremely backward to believe what we do not wish to be true.

180 days. But a day, in the language of prophecy, is put for a year. If, therefore, we add these numbers together, they will be thrice 360 years, and 180 years, or exactly twelve hundred and sixty years, for the continuance of this bloody and tyrannical power; at the end of which period it is to be completely and everlasting destroyed.

Let us see whether these strange predictions of Daniel have ever been accomplished.

The Roman empire was to be destroyed. It was so, in the fifth and sixth centuries. It was to be divided into a number of small kingdoms. It was so in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. A little horn was to arise, unperceived, and subdue three of the ten horns. The bishop of Rome, in a secret and imperceptible manner, did arise to temporal dominion, and subdued by the help of Pepin, three of those ten states into which the empire had been divided; the senate of Rome, the kingdom of Lombardy, and the exarchate of Ravenna; three governments all in Italy. And, it is extremely remarkable, that upon becoming master of these three states, the bishop of Rome assumed a triple crown, which he hath worn ever since, and which he continues to wear at this very day!

The bishop of Rome was to retain his power over these three states, and his influence over the seven others, 1260 years. If we knew exactly when to begin to reckon these years, we should know precisely when the destruction of Antichrist would take place. (5) Some begin to reckon from the year 606, when the proud prelate of Rome was declared universal bishop. Others begin from the year 666, the apocalyptic number; and others from the year 756, when he became a temporal prince. If the first period be

(5) The temporal power of the Pope is already gone: what further remains to be done, a few more fleeting years will shew. How eventful is the present period?

right, then the Pope, the undoubted Antichrist of the New Testament, will be completely destroyed, as a horn, about the year 1866. If the second period be intended by the spirit of prophecy, then his end will be near the year 1926. But if the third period be the time, then Antichrist will retain some part of his dominion over the nations till about the year 2016.(6)

Most evident it is, that he is rapidly falling:—There is a great deal, however, yet to be done. But, when God works, who shall let? all will be accomplished in due time. Not one word shall fall to the ground of all that the Lord hath spoken.

Nay, not only shall Antichrist be overthrown, but even Rome itself, the place and city where he hath carried on his abominations for so many ages, shall be everlastingly destroyed. The language of Scripture is extremely strong, and sufficiently clear and precise.(7)

Thus Daniel:—“I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.” Thus too Paul, where he is professedly speaking of Antichrist;—“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”—Thus too John—“the beast goeth into perdition.—Her plagues shall be in one day, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire—The kings of the earth shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they see the

(6) The number of Popes, who have presided over the Romish church from its first institution, is about two hundred and fifty or sixty; they have therefore presided about seven years each upon an average.

(7) It is granted that all the passages upon this subject are figurative and prophetic, and therefore must be interpreted with caution; but yet they seem so strong and precise, that we cannot understand them in any more moderate sense.

smoke of her burning, standing afar off for fear of her torment, saying, Alas! alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city; for in one hour is thy judgment come.—In one hour so great riches are come to nought!—They shall see the smoke of her burning!—And a mighty angel took a stone like a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee. And no craftsman, of whatever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee.” Immediately after these words, all the inhabitants of heaven are represented as rejoicing, and saying, “ Hallelujah! and her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”

These are strong expressions, and imply a punishment extremely severe. It is remarkable too, that all the country about the city of Rome is a kind of bitumen, or pitchy substance. And in the year 80, a fire burst out from beneath, in the middle of the city, and burnt four of the principal Heathen temples, with the sacred buildings of the capitol. Italy is a store-house of fire. And when the 1260 years are expired, Rome itself, with all its magnificence, will be absorbed into a lake of fire, sink into the sea, and rise no more at all for ever.(8)

It is this grand Antichristian apostacy(9) to which Paul unquestionably alludes, in 2 Thes. ii. 1—12; in

(8) Being persuaded of the destruction of that city, we cannot help feeling pleasure, that the French have removed many of the finest pieces of art from this vast repository of curiosities.

(9) Pope, though a Catholic, was convinced that the church of Rome had all the marks of that Anti-christian power, predicted

1 Tim. iv. 1—3; and in 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. John speaks of the same thing, 1 John ii. 18, 22; and in the Revelations he hath described the abominations of the church of Rome at considerable length, but in language highly figurative.(70) If we would be at the pains to lay all these predictions together, and compare them with those of Daniel, we should not fail to see to whom all the characters belong, and how awful the destruction is, which awaits this mother of abominations.

“ But what is all this to us? Have we not long ago renounced the errors and delusions of the church of Rome, and declared ourselves professors of the genuine doctrines of the Redeemer of mankind? May we not expect, therefore, to be delivered from those judgments, which have already fallen upon France and other countries, and which shall assuredly fall on all the antichristian states in Europe, that formerly made a part of the Roman empire?”

The ten (1) kingdoms, are all to fall, at the end of the said 1260 years, from the time they owned the dominion of the little horn. Now, England is universally allowed to have been one of the ten. If we begin to reckon the 1260 years from the time Gregory sent over Austin and his companions to preach the gospel to our idolatrous ancestors, there are a few years yet to expire, before our doom shall be sealed in the

in the writings of the New Testament: And yet he had not courage to profess himself a Protestant.

(70) The seven seals in this hieroglyphical book, refer to Rome in her Pagan state; the seven trumpets to the Roman empire in its Christian state; and the seven vials to the same Roman empire, broken into ten kingdoms, in its Popish and Anti-christian state.

(1) These ten kingdoms began to take their rise about the year 450, and proceeded more and more towards permanency for many years. The revolutions and convulsions of those ages were horribly cruel, bloody, and distressing.

courts above.(2) The times and the seasons God hath reserved in his own hand. Nations do not rise and fall by chance.

"But, is there no possibility of preventing, or avoiding, the universal subversion awaiting both us, and all the other kingdoms of Europe, which constituted parts of the ancient empire?

There seems to be one way(3) and but one, in the nature of things. And what may that be? I am sorry to say that it is one, which is by no means likely to take place. It is a thorough reformation both in theory and practice; in church and state; a general reformation in the moral and religious conduct of the inhabitants of this country. For these purposes, must not religion be reduced to gospel purity and simplicity?(4) Must not the church be totally

(2) There is some reason, from the present appearance of things, to suppose, that the 1260 prophetical years must be calculated from a period somewhat earlier than the commencement of the seventh century. The year of our Lord 538 accords with the downfall of the Pope's temporal dominion, 1798.

(3) I am led to think there is still a possibility of averting our unhappy doom, from the case of Nineveh, in Jonah; and that of Jerusalem, in Jeremiah. It were happy for us, if the possibility amounted to a probability. Our safety by no means depends upon our more frequent repetition of pharisaical forms, and superstitious ceremonies, but upon our correcting what is amiss in our morals, and un-evangelical in our doctrines and ecclesiastical constitution. Was not the last Pope dethroned at the very moment he was surrounded by his cardinals, and celebrating his exaltation to the Papal chair? Was there ever a more superstitious Pope than he? Were the ancient Jews ever more strictly and superstitiously religious, than when they crucified the Lord of Glory? or, than when their temple and nation were destroyed?

(4) Consult Hartley's Observations on Man, for a more particular account of the fall of Establishments in Christendom. Our ecclesiastical governors would do well to weigh seriously what he hath said upon this subject, while yet there is time. But what can we expect from men who are surrounded with worldly honours, entitled to a vast patronage of livings, and tempted with

unconnected with, and separate from, the civil constitution? Must not our bishops and clergy be reduced to the scriptural standard? Jesus Christ left sole king in his own church? and human ordinances, in

near 100,000 pounds a year, to permit things to continue as they are? He must be almost more than man, whose virtue rises above such seductions. Tillotson, Burnet, and others, will complain all is not right; will profess they wish things to be altered; but how seldom do we find a bishop or dignified clergyman, who believes the Scriptures so firmly, as to renounce all the riches and honours of this world, and to walk according to the unadulterated gospel of the Saviour of mankind? When a man is made a D. D. does not the spirit of a D. D. usually come upon him? and when a bishop, the spirit of a bishop? Though he had been ever so eager for the removal of abuses before, does he not usually endeavour to lull conscience to rest, and even become an advocate for the continuance of things in their present state? To be sure, he has much to lose, and little to gain, by any change that can take place; and, "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." When a man has subscribed an indefinite number of times to a set of propositions, some of which he doubts, and others of which he disbelieves, it is a thousand to one, but he goes on to the end of the chapter, and sinks at last into eternal perdition, as a base prevaricator with God and conscience. If in such a case we can bear a state of safety for eternity, religion is all a farce, and it is of little consequence, with respect to the future world, whether we be Christians, or Heathens, Jews or Mohammedans.—*God requireth truth in the inward parts!*

The civil part of the British constitution is also capable of considerable improvement. Every thing of both kinds, however, might easily be accomplished by the endeavours of our legislature. Do not the criminal laws of the country stand in need of revisal? Let any man judge of the truth of this, when it is considered that we have upwards of 160 offences punishable with death.

The jurisprudence of the country also seems to want reform in a variety of respects. The court of chancery is enormously tedious and expensive. Do not the other departments of the law also need much reform? In Middlesex alone, in 1793, the number of bailable writs and executions for debts, from ten to twenty pounds, amounted to no less than 5,712, and the aggregate amount of the debts sued for, to 81,791 pounds. The costs of these actions, although made up and not defended at all, would amount to 68,728 pounds—And if defended, the aggregate expense to recover 81,791 pounds, must be no less than 283,920 pounds! being considerably more than three times the amount of

things sacred, give way to divine prescriptions?—Without these great moral and religious changes, can we expect to be preserved from the general wreck of Europe? And whether these changes are likely to take place among us let any cool and impartial observer judge. Should not our bishops and clergy see these things, and zealously attempt a reformation in the ecclesiastical constitution of the country, and among the great body of the people? Should they not universally cry aloud and not spare; and sound the trumpet in God's holy mountain? Should we not all set ourselves in good earnest to stem the torrent of iniquity, which overflows these happy lands, and threatens to involve us in one general calamity? The time is come. God hath sent forth the sword among the nations, and it is *reformation or ruination.* (5) With-

the debts sued for and defended.—At present, the rule is to allow the same cost for forty shillings, as for 10,000 pounds.—Why are these abuses permitted to continue? Is not the case but too clear? *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: from the soal of the so even unto the head there is no soundness among us.*

(8) Porteus, Benson, Watson, Horsley, Paley, and others, in vain contend in favour of the gospel of Christ, while they themselves, are, by their conduct, the grand supporters of our ecclesiastical hierarchy, with all its corruptions. If they wish effectually to serve their country, and the cause of humanity, they should apply their abilities to reduce the national religion to the pure standard of the gospel. But what can we expect, when men's eyes are blinded and their hearts bribed, by worldly honours and preferments? Abundance of persons in the church of Rome have seen, and do now see the abuses and corruptions of that church—father Paul in the last age, Geddes and Berrington in the present, but they cannot prevail on themselves to quit their stations; so some persons with us have long seen the abuses, and unevangelical traits of our own church, and yet they make themselves easy, by writing in defence of the immortal cause of christianity, while the vessel in which they themselves are embarked, will be dashed against the rocks. If one man has a right to prevaricate and subscribe what he does not believe, why has not another? Though of sentiments in religion very different, I must say, that Lindsey, Jebb, Hammond, Disney, and others, who have sacrificed their preferments to the peace of their own minds, are ho-

out this it may be declared by the authority of the word of the Lord, that as soon as the predicted 1260 years are accomplished, we shall be swept with the besom of destruction. For thus saith the infallible

nourable men, and deserving of all praise. But can we say the same of those clergymen, who go on subscribing and swearing to various particular propositions, which they know and believe to be wrong.

Chillingworth's conduct has had a considerable effect in reconciling the clergy to subscribe to doctrines which they avowedly do not believe. For he declared, in a letter to Sheldon, that, "if he subscribed, he subscribed his own damnation," and yet in no long space of time, he actually did subscribe to the articles of the church again and again! Lord! what is man!

The salvo by which he and some other clergymen get over their scruples, is, to subscribe the 39 articles as articles and terms of peace. This is a shameful evasion, and inconsistent with common honesty. At this rate, a man in Italy may subscribe Pius's creed; in Turkey the Korân of Mohammed; or in a Jewish government, the Talmud of the Rabbins.

I have been struck with a similar sentiment in Paine's *Age of Reason*; and here at least I agree with him, though we differ, *toto cœlo*, upon almost every thing where the Sacred Writings are concerned:—"It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief of things which he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of priest for the sake of gain, and to qualify himself for that trade, he begins with perjury. Can we conceive any thing more destructive of morality than this."

This subject is considered in a very serious point of view by Burnet, only he applies it to our declaring that we are moved by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel.

A clergyman of our church hath said—"If any one asks, what the expressions in Scripture, regenerate—born of the Spirit—new creatures, mean!—We answer, that they mean nothing! nothing to us!—nothing to be found, or sought for, in the present circumstances of christianity."—This gentleman knows that these declarations of his are extremely different from the doctrines of the church of England, and yet since he published these sentiments, he has subscribed more than once, and as far as appears, would subscribe again and again, if two or three more good pre-ferments should fall in his way.

Oracle :—" Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them." The four empires and ten kingdoms, as they are now constituted, shall, along with the whore of Babylon, be swept from the face of the earth, and be known no more at all, in their present forms. And what shall be the issue? Afflictive as the change may be, the end shall prove glorious. " In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." All people, nations, and languages, shall serve the Redeemer of mankind in the true spirit and power of his religion. " His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the

My indignation compels me to say, that a body of clergy of that description—however learned, ingenious, and worthy they may be in other respects—deserve extirpation from the face of the earth; and if there be a judgment to come, our doom shall be uncommonly severe. The Scripture declares, all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. And what more solemn lie can there be, than subscribing our names, that we believe a number of propositions, which in our consciences we judge to be false? unless it be that other declaration, "we trust we are moved by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel," when we do not believe there is any Holy Ghost, but laugh at every pretension of the sort as Methodism and enthusiasm? If the Lord be a God of knowledge by whom actions are weighed, we prevaricating parsons shall have a sad account to give another day. We may keep up our heads a few years now, while in possession of two or three good livings, and the world smiles upon us, but the day of darkness is at no great distance, when nothing but integrity and conscious uprightness will stand us in any stead; and when the clergy become generally prevaricators with their solemn subscriptions, the fate of the English church is determined.

whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.—Then shall the wolves dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice-den. The followers of Jesus shall never hurt or destroy one another again, but shall beat their swords into plow-shares; and their spears into pruning hooks ; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

“ But why should a Protestant nation share the common fate of the Catholic countries, even upon the principles of the prophetic Scriptures ?”

Have you reflected upon the fate of Holland, Geneva, and the reformed cantons of Switzerland ? They were wholly Protestant, and made their boast of being more pure than most other churches of the reformed religion, and yet they have undergone the same changes as the Catholic states, though with infinitely less blood and slaughter. And though the pope(6)

(6) The Pope of Rome may be a respectable private character. There have been a few such in a course of ages. But, because he is at the head of the great apostacy from the genuine gospel of Christ, he shall go into perdition. The late king of France was a worthy man, and had many and considerable virtues; yet because he was at the head of one of the ten antichristian kingdoms which gave its power to the support of the Beast; and, because the 1260 prophetic years in that kingdom were expired, he went into perdition. George III. is a good character, and his successors, we trust will be the same, but unless there shall be piety and wisdom in the government of the country, civil and religious, to

and church of Rome may be, and certainly are at the head of the grand 1260 years delusion, yet all other churches, of whatever denomination, whether established, or tolerated, or persecuted, which partake of the same spirit, or have instituted doctrines and ceremonies inimical to the pure and unadulterated gospel of Christ, shall sooner or later share in the fate of that immense fabric of human ordinances.

That we have various things in our ecclesiastical establishment, which cannot be defended, upon the pure principles of the Son of God, is unquestionable. Our excellent reformers(7) did great things, considering how they had been educated, and the age in which they lived. They were good men, and proceeded, in their regenerating work, much farther

reform radically the constitution, and to render it consistent with the true spirit of divine revelation, there is reason to tremble for the consequence. Private worth will never protect public and general depravity, from the punishment due, and the destruction denounced: the fate of a nation may, for a season, be suspended, till the Noahs, the Daniels, the Jobs, and the Josiahs, are taken out of the way.

(7) Several of our church appendages are not only unnecessary but pernicious. Cranmer speaks in strong terms against some, which he was obliged from the necessity of circumstances to retain. In a letter to Cromwell, he says: "Having had experience both in times past, and also in our days, how the sect of Prebendaries have not only spent their time in much idleness, and their substance in superfluous belly cheer, I think it not to be a convenient state or degree to be maintained and established. Considering, first, that commonly a prebendary is neither a learner, nor a teacher, but a good ylander. Then by the same name, they look to be chief, and to bear all the whole rule and pre-eminence in the college, where they be resident; by means whereof, the younger of their own nature, given more to pleasure, good cheer, and pastime, than to abstinence, study, and learning, shall easily be brought from their books to follow the appetite and example of the same Prebendaries, being their heads and rulers. And the state of the Prebendaries hath been so excessively abused, that when learned men have been admitted into such room, many times they have desisted from their good and godly studies, and all other virtuous exercise of preaching and teaching."

than might have been expected; but their successors have not followed the noble example set before them, of reducing the religious establishment of the country, to primitive purity, and evangelical simplicity.(8) We have been contented to suffer our religious constitution, our doctrines, and ceremonies, and forms of public worship, to remain, nearly in the same unpurged, adulterated, and superstitious state, in which the original reformers left them.(9) At least, the alterations that have been made since Edward VI. time have been few and inconsiderable. And the ye-

(8) "There are many prophecies, which declare the fall of the ecclesiastical powers of the Christian world. And though each church seems to flatter itself with the hopes of being exempted, yet it is very plain, that the prophetical characters belong to all. They have all left the true, pure, simple religion; and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. They are all merchants of the earth, and have set up a kingdom of this world, abounding in riches, temporal power and external pomp. They have all a dogmatizing spirit, and persecute such as do not receive their own mark, and worship the image which they have set up.—*It is very true, that the Church of Rome is Babylon the Great, and the mother of harlots, and of the abominations of the earth: But all the rest have copied her example.*"

Hartley was not a *Dissenter*, but a most serious, learned and candid churchman, who wrote nearly fifty years ago.

Downham reckoned up 600 gross errors in the system of popery.

If any person will seriously consider the low and superstitious state of the minds of men in general, in the time of James I. much more in the reign of his predecessors, he will not be surprised to find, that there are various matters in our ecclesiastical constitution, which require some alteration. Our forefathers did great things, and we cannot be sufficiently thankful for their labours; but much more remains to be done; and it will be found a task of no ordinary difficulty, peaceably and quietly to reduce things to a pure evangelical state. But with danger, or without danger, the prophecies of Daniel being true, such a change must take place sooner or later.

(9) Cranmer, Bucer, Jewel, and others, never considered the Reformation, which took place in their own time as complete. They did what they could, and what the humours of men would then bear, and left to their successors to accomplish what was still lacking.

ry last improvements, which took place in our ecclesiastical frame of things, except some few alterations and additions made in the public forms of worship during the reign of Charles II. were in the reign of that haughty, persecuting, wavering, and yet tyrannical bigot, James I. who would bear no contradiction, but established every thing just according to his own pleasure.(80)

Indeed, the religion of Jesus Christ admits of no civil establishment at all. It is inconsistent with the very nature of it, and it was never designed to be incorporated with any secular institution whatever.(1)

(80) The conference at Hampton-Court shewed the over-bearing conduct of this pedantic king, and the fulsome flattery of court-bishops. Several persons were put to death, in this reign, for their religious opinions. Is not this one of the infallible marks of the beast?

The next serious effort for reformation in our church, was soon after the restoration. Charles II. behaved handsomely at first upon the occasion; but acting under the controul of a number of bigotted and high-priestly bishops, whose minds were still sore with resentment, he afterwards forfeited all his merit, as the guardian of religious liberty, and became a vile and cruel persecutor. Is not this too, an indubitable mark of the beast?

After this a serious attempt was made to remove the things objected to in our church, soon after the revolution, under the auspices of Tillotson, Patrick, Tennison, Kidder, Stillingfleet, Burnet, and others; but being opposed by a larger number of bishops, all their efforts came to nothing. They had been accustomed to read mumpsimus all their lives, and mumpsimus it should be, they were determined; and the two houses of parliament were disposed to acquiesce in their papistical and superstitious views. We shall rarely have again, at one time, such a constellation of learned, pious, and liberal minded bishops, as then adorned the English church.

(1) The immense empire of China, which contains 333 millions of inhabitants has no established religion. And the gospel of Jesus Christ will never have its full and proper effect upon mankind, until it is completely disentangled from every human institution. Leave it to itself; let it have fair play; clog it not with civil pains and penalties; let it stand or fall by its own intrinsic worth; let neither kings nor bishops lay their officious hands upon it; and then see how it will make its way among men. The greatest possible motive, by which man can be animated, is the salvation of his own soul. If this will not move us, nothing else will be of any avail.

It made its way at first, not only without human aid, but even in opposition to all laws, both civil and religious, which then prevailed in the Roman empire. This was the state of it for upwards of 300 years. It seems too, to be the intention of Divine Providence, to reduce it again to the same simple and unconnected state. America hath set the example. France, Italy, Holland, and Switzerland are going the same way. And it is highly probable, all the other states in Europe will, in due time, follow the same steps. As things now are in this country, the religion of Jesus Christ, which was not only not to be of this world<sup>(2)</sup> but in direct opposition to it,<sup>(3)</sup> is certainly a temporal, worldly, civil institution. At least, it is a strange mixture of things secular and religious:<sup>(4)</sup> nearly as much so, as it is in the catholic countries.

(2) John xviii. 36, 37, where Christ claims the kingdom.

(3) Compare Mat v. 3—12, where he asserts the nature of that kingdom, and the qualifications of his subjects.

(4) One of our English poets, who was even a bigot of the church, hath expressed himself on this subject, in the manner following:

“ Inventions added in a fatal hour,  
 Human appendages of pomp and pow'r,  
 Whatever shines in outward grandeur great,  
 I give it up—a creature of the state.  
 Wide of the church, as hell from heav'n is wide,  
 The blaze of riches and the glare of pride,  
 The vain desire to be entitled lord,  
 The worldly kingdom, and the princely sword.  
 But should the bold, usurping spirit dare,  
 Still higher climb, and sit in Moses' chair,  
 Pow'r o'er my faith and conscience to maintain,  
 Shall I submit, and suffer it to reign?  
 Call it the church, and darkness put for light,  
 Falsehood with truth confound, and wrong with right?  
 No : I dispute the evil's haughty claim,  
 The spirit of the world be still its name,  
 Whatever call'd by man, 'tis purely evil,  
 'Tis Babel, Antichrist, and Pope, and Devil.”

It is a curious circumstance in the history of religion in the present day, that while light, and knowledge, and liberality of sentiment

As to the king, or queen, of any country, being head of the church, and having the appointment of bishops, and the nomination to church-livings, it is utterly inconsistent with the very essence of the evangelical dispensation, and the unalienable rights of mankind. Neither his majesty—nor the lord chancellor, nor his majesty's ministers, have, or can have any concern in the government of the church, or in the appointment of officers in it, or to it, directly, or indirectly, according to the spirit of the gospel, but only in their private capacities as individual members of the church. No man upon earth is entitled to any such power. It is one of the very worst traits of popery, and an infallible criterion of an anti-christian assuming. Mat. xx. 28, and xxiii. 1—12.

As the law now stands in this country, the king is absolute head of the church, and the fountain of all ecclesiastical power; but so far as the patronage of benefices goes, this is more nominal than real; for there are as many heads as there are patrons of livings. A drunken, swearing, libertine lord chancellor, who is living in open fornication or adultery, contrary to every law human and divine, as has been the case, has the appointment to a large number of livings: A corrupt, vile, unbelieving, immoral, wicked minister of state, has the nomination of abundance of others.

are rapidly diffusing themselves among mankind, a clergyman cuts off from salvation, most of the foreign Protestant churches, and the whole body of Dissenters of every description in this country, but by the uncovenanted mercies of God. Richard Hill, in his *Apology for Brotherly Love*, has given such an answer to Daubeny's Guide, as that gentleman cannot refute. If the doctrine of the Guide be right, we cannot be justified in leaving the church of Rome. The capital mistake of the whole seems to be, a substitution of the church of England for the church of Christ, exactly in the same manner as the Papists substitute the church of Rome for the church of Christ.

A papist, or some of the most immoral nobility or gentry of the land, have the patronage of others. In not a few instances, ladies have the presentation to church preferments. These are all virtually and substantially so many heads of the church; while the king or queen is only nominally and partially so. This is surely a lamentable state of things. Can any man wonder at the spread of infidelity and irreligion? Can we justly expect other than the downfal of such a system of corrupt, worldly policy? These melancholy truths sound harsh and disagreeable in the ears of interested men, and men who swallow every thing as gospel, to which they have been long accustomed; but I affirm it with all possible seriousness, that, as I understand the Scriptures, a radical reform, and the removal of all these secular circumstances alone, can save us for any length of time, from national distress. I refer our bishops—and beg they will seriously consider the awful declaration—Dan. ii. 35, 44. Is not the time for its accomplishment fast approaching, and near at hand?

I have spoken of the patronage of church-livings. The church-livings of England and Wales make together, about ten thousand. Of these, near a thousand are in the gift of the king. It is customary, however, for the lord chancellor, to present all the livings under the value of twenty pounds, in the king's book, and for the ministers of state to present all the rest. Those under twenty pounds are about 780, and those above, near 180. Upwards of 1600 pieces of church preferment, of different sizes and descriptions, are in the gift of the 26 bishops: more than 600 in the presentation of the two universities: about 1000 in the gift of the several cathedrals, and other clerical institutions: about 5,700 livings are in the nomination of the nobility and gentry of the land, men, women, and children; and there may be 50 or 60 of a description different from any of the above,

and nearer to the propriety of things. These are all so many heads of the church, the king or queen of the country being a kind of arch-head.(5)

The bishops of the establishment are, contrary to all ancient usage, chosen by the civil power, the clergy and people over whom they are to preside, not having the least negative upon their election. When they are chosen too, they take their seats in the upper house of parliament, like unto the temporal lords: this is good human policy, supposing the kingdom of Christ to be a mere worldly sovereignty; but it is utterly inconsistent with the spirituality of our Saviour's empire, and has had for many ages a most unhappy effect upon the interests of his religion in the world.(6) Their emoluments are of such a nature, their worldly engagements so numerous, and the temptations to the pleasures, honours, and amusements of life so strong, that their minds become secularized, and they lose all lively relish for the peculiar duties of ministers of the gospel; which they therefore very generally commit to the inferior orders of the clergy. They are as much officers of the crown as the judges and magistrates of the land. They are chosen by the civil power, they are paid by the civil

(5) Jewel writes, "that Elizabeth refused to be called head of the church; and adds, that title could not be justly given to any mortal, it being due only to Christ; and that such titles had been so much abused by Antichrist, that they ought not to be any longer continued."

Wolsey, under Henry VIII. was head of the English church, and one of the greatest tyrants over the consciences of men that ever existed. Blessed be God for the reformation! and the present liberty which we enjoy!

(6) If the gospel of Christ gave encouragement to such a state of things as this, I would reject all its pretensions, as a divine scheme, with indignation. I do not wonder the world abounds with infidels and infidelity! What pity, however, men will not distinguish between the use of the gospel, and the abuse of it! between the gospel itself, and the additions which have been made to it by interested men!

power, they are amenable to the civil power alone, the clergy and the people not possessing the least controul. And then, as to the titles, by which they are designated, they carry the most indisputable marks of the antichristian apostacy. *His grace, the most reverend father in God, William, by divine providence, lord archbishop of Canterbury!—The right reverend father in God, John, by divine permission, lord bishop of London!*—What is there in the titles of the pope of Rome, (7) that is more magnificent than the sound of these words? How unlike is all this to the spirit of the gospel, and the character and conduct of the lowly Saviour of mankind? Mat. xi. 28—30; xxiii. 1—12. How much calculated are such high sounding titles to swell the pride of frail mortals? Popes, bishops, and parsons are made of like stuff with other men!

And then, what shall we say to the secular, and lukewarm condition of the generality of the clergy of the land?—to the patronage of benefices?—to the common and abominable sale of livings?—to our simoniacal contracts?—our sinecures, pluralities, non-residences? (8)—to our declaring we are moved by

(7) Paine, speaking of the reformation, says, “A multiplicity of national popes grew out of the downfal of the pope of chris-tendom.”—Rome itself scarcely ever had a more bloody, libidinous, and detestable head of the church, than was Henry VIII. the self-created pope of our own ecclesiastical constitution.

(8) The curates in many cases are as culpable with respect to non-residence, as the bishops, and rectors, and vicars. In my own neighbourhood, and mostly in my own parish, we have upwards of twelve chapels, where there is no resident clergyman. It is much the same in other parts of the kingdom.

The reader will find several of these defects of the church of England touched upon by Burnet.—I add,

“My lord S—h has got a mistress, of whom he has grown weary. On condition the rev. A. B. will marry her, and make her an honest woman, he shall be rector of such a living in the gift of his lordship.

the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel, when we are moved by nothing more than a desire to obtain a good living, and, perhaps, even deny that there is any Holy Ghost?—to our reading one species of doctrines in the desk, and preaching directly opposite in the pulpit?

Abundance of persons object to several things in the 39 articles of religion—to several things in the book of homilies—and to the imposition of subscription to any human creeds and explications of doc-

The living of C—h is in the gift of Mr. G—t; he has got a daughter; if the rev. Ch. P—s will marry her, he shall be presented to the church.

Mr. G—n has a son, who is neither fit for law, physic, or the army. He has such a living in his patronage. This son shall be trained to the church, and be incumbent of the family rectory.

My lord D—n has got four sons; one shall enjoy the title and estate; another shall go into the army, and be made a general; another shall go to sea, and become an admiral; the fourth shall be trained for the church, and be promoted to a bishoprick.

Sir P—r P—r, has in his gift a rectory of the value of 2000 pounds a year. The rev. G. W. agrees to give him five thousand pounds in hand, and five hundred a year for ten years.

In this manner are daily bartered the souls of men, like sheep in a market!—Is it probable that such a state of things should be maintained for many ages or years longer? If there be a God, who judgeth the earth, he cannot look upon such abominations with indifference. Abuses of a similar kind have brought destruction upon other countries, and shall England alone be permitted thus to play the devil, and no notice be taken of us by the moral Governor of the world? Such things are indefensible, and make one blush for the church in which it is possible they should take place.

The valuable preferments in our church, are almost universally obtained by money, or by interest; merit having little or nothing to do in the business. My indignation constrains me to state, that Maurice, author of Indian Antiquities, &c. &c.—O shame to a venal age!—is left to starve upon a distant and laboriouscuracy of fifty pounds a year.

“ Ye bards of Britain, break the useless lyre,  
And rend, disdainful, your detested lays;  
Who now shall dare to letter’d fame aspire,  
Devotes to penury his hapless days.”

trines whatever.(9) No man, or set of men upon earth, has a right to demand any such thing of a fellow Christian.

Can any thing in the whole absurd system of popery be more improper, than to make every young man, without exception, subscribe, when he becomes a member of either of our English universities, that he believes from his soul, *ex animo*, some late trifling alterations at Cambridge excepted, that every thing contained in the articles, homilies, common prayer, and offices of ordination, is agreeable to the word of God? when in all ordinary cases, he has never seriously and attentively read either one or another of them? How is it likely, that a boy, raw from school, should be competent to such a task? And if he is to subscribe upon the faith of others, on the same principle he may subscribe to the mass-book, the koran, or any other book whatever.

After a careful examination, I am constrained to object, *pede et manu*, to several things in the 141 canons, and consider the requirement, on oath, of canonical obedience to the bishop of the diocese where we officiate, as one of the most detestable instances of antichristian imposition, that ever was exercised over

(9) Subscription to the 39 articles hath kept many a good man out of the church, but no bad ones.

"The requiring subscription to the 39 articles," Burnet says, "is a great imposition."

Whiston being one day in discourse with lord chancellor King, who was brought up a Dissenter at Exeter, but had conformed; a dispute arose about signing articles which we do not believe, for the sake of preferment. This the chancellor openly justified, "because," said he, "we must not lose our usefulness for scruples." Whiston, who was quite of an opposite opinion, asked his lordship, "If in his court they allowed of such prevarication?" He answered, "We do not." "Then," said Whiston, "suppose God Almighty should be as just in the next world as my lord chancellor is in this, where are we then?"

a body of clergy.(90) And yet, after we have gotten our education, at a considerable expence, possibly at the expence of our whole fortune, we must take this abhorred oath, or renounce the profession to which we have been trained, after our fortune, with which we should have begun business, is gone, and the proper time of life expired. These things ought not to be so.—This is not the fault of the bishops, but of the constitution. It is one of the existing laws of the establishment, and cannot be dispensed with as things now stand ; the bishops are as much bound to administer the oath, as we are to take it.

There are others who object to the baptismal office—the office of confirmation—the office for the sick—the communion office—the ordination office—the burial office—the common prayer—the litany—Athanasius's creed—the calendar—our cathedral worship—our spiritual courts(1)—,

(90) The 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 38th, 58th, 72d, 139th, 140th, and 141st canons, are most of them peculiarly objectionable. Prior to experience, it would appear highly incredible, that conscientious and liberal minded clergymen should be able to swear such kind of obedience. The good Lord pardon his servants, for we surely consider not what we do.

Let any man seriously read, and soberly consider these several canons, and then judge of their tendency. They contain the very worst species of popery, that is, a spirit of infallibility. They proceed, at least, upon the infallibility of our own church, while we disavow that infallibility, and condemn the pretension in the church of Rome.

(1) Burnet, who was well acquainted with these matters, says, "And be it remembered, that every bishop in England and Ireland, has a court of this description ; and that the less a true religion prevails in any diocese, the greater and more frequent are the abuses of these courts.—As for the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, it has been the burden of my life, to see how it was administered : our courts are managed under the rules of the canon law, dilatory and expensive ; and as their constitution is bad, so their business is small ; and therefore all possible contrivances are used to make the most of those causes which come before them ; so they are universally dreaded and hated."

the management of our briefs(2)—the test

(2) Many persons have an objection to contribute any thing to briefs, because a principal part of the money collected goes into the hands of improper persons. The usual charges attending them, with the collections thereupon, will be best understood from the following instance.

For the parish church of Ravenstondale, in the county of Westmoreland.

	£. s. d.
Lodging the certificate	0 7 6
Fiat and signing	19 4 2
Letters patent	21 11 2
Printing and paper	16 0 0
Teller and porter	0 5 0
Stamps	13 12 6
Copy of the brief	0 5 0
Portage to and from the stampers	0 5 0
Matts for packing	0 4 0
Portage to the waggons	0 4 0
Carriers to the undertaker at Stafford	1 11 6
Postage of letters and certificate	0 4 8
Clerk's fee	2 2 0
 Total of the patent charges	 75 16 6
Salary for 9986 briefs at 6d each	249 13 0
Additional salary for London	5 0 0
 The whole charges	 £.330 9 6
Collection on 9986 briefs	£.614 12 9
Charges	330 9 6
 Clear collection	 284 3 3

The expences for a brief for St. Mary's church, in Colchester, were 546l. 19s. 10d.

Thus, according to the most moderate of these cases, if ten briefs are issued in the course of a year, there would be collected upon them the sum of 6146l. 7s. 6d. of which 3308l. 5s. is expended in clearing 2838l.2s. 6d. for the ten charitable purposes.

But if we take the more extended of these cases, the expense of collecting ten briefs would be 5469l. 18s. 4d. which is within 676l. 9s. 2d. of the whole money in the former case collected."

There is a deduction of a similar kind from public money, in Michael's chapel in this town. Fifty pounds a year are ordered by royal grant to be paid out of the exchequer, to the mayor of the corporation for the time being, for the use of the minister, without fee or reward. Instead of fifty, however, he never re-

and corporation acts(3)—and our tithe laws.(4)

There are some who earnestly deplore our total want of discipline, and our incomplete toleration—that our church holds out other terms of communion than the Scripture hath enjoined—and that she is a mighty encourager of ambition among the superior orders of the clergy, by the several ranks, degrees, honours, and emoluments, which prevail among us. The people of every age and country have an unalienable right to choose their own ministers; and no king, no ruler, no bishop, no lord, no gentleman, no man, or body

receives more than three and thirty. Seventeen pounds are deducted for fees of office. So much for, "without fee or reward!" Charitable donations of every kind, should be reduced as little as possible, by those through whose hands they must necessarily pass. An undue deduction is a sort of sacrilege, and must be accounted for as such before the Judge Supreme.

The number of church and chapel wardens in England and Wales, must be considerably above 20,000. Every one of these takes a solemn oath when he enters upon his office. And who will undertake to prove that nine in ten of these church officers are not perjured? the oath is of such a nature, that it is next to impossible to keep it inviolate. Very few of those gentlemen ever attempt to fulfil their engagements. They make no efforts to avoid the grievous sin of perjury.

(3) "Hast thou by statue, shov'd from its design  
 The Saviour's feast, his own blest bread and wine,  
 And made the symbols of atoning grace  
 An office-key, a picklock to a place,  
 That infidels may prove their title good  
 By an oath dipp'd in sacramental blood?  
 A blot that will be still a blot, in spite  
 Of all that grave apologists may write,  
 And though a bishop toil to cleanse the stain,  
 He wipes and scours the silver cup in vain."

Hoadly used to say, "Our liturgical forms ought to be revised and amended, only for our own sakes, though there were no Dissenters in the land."

(4) Tithes were not paid in England till the eighth century, and were then given to the clergy by an act of tyrannical power and usurpation, by two of our Popish and superstitious kings; and, in one of the instances as a commutation for murder.

of men upon earth, has any just claim whatever, to dictate, who shall administer to them in the concerns of their salvation; or to say—You shall think this, believe that, worship here, or abstain from worshipping there.

For much more than a thousand years, the Christian world was a stranger to religious liberty. Toleration was unknown till about a century ago. The clergy have always been unfriendly to religious liberty: when the act of toleration was obtained in king William's time, great numbers of them were much against it:—but both the name and thing are inconsistent with the very nature of the gospel of Christ. For, have not I as much right to controul you in your religious concerns, as you have to controul me? To talk of tolerating, implies an authority! He is a tyrant, a very pope, who pretends to any such thing!—These matters will be better understood by and by. The whole Christian world lay in darkness, upon this subject, for many ages. Dr. Owen was the first who wrote in favour of it, in the year 1648—Milton followed him about the year 1558, in his Treatise of the Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes. And the immortal Locke succeeded with his golden Treatise on Toleration, in 1689. But notwithstanding these, and many other works which have since been written on the same subject, much still remains to be done in this country. Though we have had the honour of being among the first of the nations, which obtained a large portion of civil and religious freedom, others are now taking the lead of us, on the rights of conscience. And it does not appear that we ever can be a thoroughly united and happy people, till every good subject enjoys equal civil privileges, without any regard to religious sects and opinions. If a man be a peaceable, industrious, moral, and religious person, and an obedient subject to the civil government under which he lives, let his religious views of things

be what they may, he seems to have a just claim to the enjoyment of every office, privilege, and emolument of that government. And till this is in fact the case, there never can be a settled state of things. There will be an eternal enmity between the governing and the governed; an everlasting struggle for superiority. But when every member of society enjoys equal privileges with his fellow members, the bone of contention is removed, and there is nothing for which they should any longer be at enmity. Equal and impartial liberty; equal privileges and emoluments, are, or should be, the birth-right of every member of civil society; and it would be the glory of any government to bestow upon its serious, religious, and morally-acting citizens, their right, without any regard to the ~~sect~~ or party to which they belong. Talents and integrity alone should be the sine qua non to recommend any man to the notice of people in power. This would make us an united and happy people.

On the subject of the patronage of livings, it may be proper to observe, that the bishop of — enjoys very considerable privileges of this nature, which have been shamefully abused. Not less than 130 presentations belong to him! A certain episcopal gentleman of that diocese, knowing the extensive emoluments which he was likely to be possessed of in this way, brought his son up to the church; and, when he came of proper age, bestowed first one living upon him and then another, as they became vacant, to a very considerable amount, which this son enjoys at this day. He is now one of our dignified clergymen, and in possession of a very unreasonable number of valuable preferments, to most of which he pays extremely little personal attention. He takes care, however, to secure the fleece, the devil may take the flock. John x. 1—18.

Another son of Aaron, in a neighbouring district, which might be named, possesses preferments in the church, by the procurement of his episcopal father, to the amount of 2000 pounds a year. He has for a long season been extremely attentive to his tythes; but hardly ever man paid less attention to the salvation of the souls of his people, and the sacred duties of his office. Seldom does he appear among the former, less frequently still does he attend the duties of the latter. Fifty or sixty pounds a year he reluctantly pays to a journeyman parson, to supply his own lack of service; but like master like man; they are a miserable couple together; the one is penurious, the other dissolute. What must the condition of the flock be, under the care of two such wretched shepherds?

I will mention a third curious instance of clerical sagacity. A certain rectory, not fifty miles from this place, is of the value of near 2000 pounds a year. A kind young lady, whose friends have sufficient interest with the patron, falls in love with a wicked, swearing, dashing officer in the army, and marries him. That a comfortable maintenance may be secured for the happy pair, it is agreed, that the gentleman shall change the colour of his clothes, apply himself to the attainment of a smattering of Latin and Greek, and admit himself a member of one of our famous Universities. There he actually now is, qualifying himself to take possession of this bouncing benefice. The incumbent being dead, a pliable parson is put in for a time as a locum tenens. And when the quondam officer has obtained his proper credentials, this worthy Levite must resign all his fat pigs in favour of this son of Mars. The white-washed officer will then come forward, and declare in the face of God and man, with a lie in his mouth, that "he trusts he is moved by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel."

If these were solitary instances of improper proceedings in church-matters, it would not be worth while to notice them. But alas! they are only specimens of what is by no means uncommon, where valuable livings are concerned. Were the business of private patronage and presentation thoroughly investigated, and laid before the public, the picture would be highly disgusting to every serious mind, and call for reformation with a tone not easy to be resisted.

The ecclesiastical and civil parts of our constitution, are in opposition one to the other: for the former, in the book of homilies, especially, holds forth the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, while the latter is founded, by the compact at the revolution, on the reciprocal rights of king and people. In this respect, therefore, a reformation is highly desirable. Every clergyman, particularly, should see and feel this, who is obliged to subscribe, *ex animo*, that all and every thing contained in the book of Common Prayer, &c. is agreeable to the Sacred Writings.

I add a circumstance, which seems an hardship to the enlightened and conscientious part of the clergy. When we baptise children, we thank God "that it hath pleased him to regenerate them with the Holy Spirit, to receive them for his own children by adoption, and to incorporate them into his holy church." When the same children are presented to the bishop for confirmation, he also addresses the Divine Being as having "vouchsafed to regenerate them by water and the Holy Ghost, and as having given unto them the forgiveness of all their sins!" while many of them are as vile young rogues as ever existed. Then, when we come to bury them, we dare do no other than send them all to heaven, though many of those we commit to the earth have been as wicked in life as men well can be on this side hell. This surely is a great hardship. Yet we have no remedy. We must do it, or forfeit our roast beef and plum-pudding.

But what I infer from this view of the matter is, that if the doctrines of baptismal regeneration and final perseverance be true, every member of the church of England is as sure of heaven when he dies, as if he were already there. How is this consistent with the 17th article of religion?—There is another circumstance in our public offices, which seems to me to affect the credit of our church, and the comfort of its ministers. The morning service formerly consisted of three parts, which were used at three different times of the forenoon. These are now thrown into one, and all used at one and the same time. Supposing, each service taken singly to be ever so unexceptionable, the conjunction of them renders the whole full of repetition. By this absurd union, the Lord's prayer is repeated five times every Sunday morning; and on sacrament days, if there happens to be a baptism and a churching, it is repeated no less than eight times, in the space of about two hours. Use may reconcile us to any thing, how absurd soever it be—witness the popish ceremonies—but let us suppose, that any of the sectarists of the country should, in their public devotions, be guilty of the same tautology, what should we think and say of them? Should we not conclude they were mad?

By the same absurd conjunction of the three ancient services into one, we are obliged by the laws of our church to pray for the king no less than five times every Lord's day morning: and on communion days even six. If I were a bishop, or a rich pluralist, or a fat rector, my eyes might be so far blinded with gold dust, that I should not see these imperfections of our public service; but, as it is, I do see them, and feel them, and groan under them every sabbath day of my life. They may love such things that, will, I do not.

Some of the objections, which are usually made to several parts of our ecclesiastical code of doctrines and

laws, are of great consequence in themselves; and as they respectively constitute a part of the general system, and are connected with other things of a more serious and objectionable nature, and as we are compelled to swear obedience to all the canons, and subscribe *ex animo*, to all and every thing contained in the common prayer, &c. as being agreeable to the Holy Scriptures; the least deviations from those Scriptures become great and weighty. And though there can be no solid objection to the doctrines of the establishment, in general, yet seeing there are some things, which certainly are reprehensible, and those too of no very indifferent nature, the imposition of them in a manner so solemn, is an extremely great hardship, and not to be justified upon any principle of expedience whatever. There is not a bishop in England who does not continually transgress one or more of the 141 canons; and, there is not an episcopal character in the nation, who can lay his hand upon his heart, and appeal to heaven, that he believes all and every thing he subscribes. Why then not strive to repeal what is faulty? Why not ease the labouring consciences of those clergymen who are upright in the land?

These, and some other matters which might be brought forward more at large, are truly objectionable, and strong indications, that we are not so far removed from the old meretricious lady of Babylon, as we would willingly have the world to believe.(4) Among the several protestant establishments, we must be, at least, considered as the eldest daughter of that "first-born of wickedness, that man of sin, that son of perdition."

(4) The cruelty of that church is horrible. Mede reckons up 1,200 000 of the Vallenses and Albigenses put to death in 30 years! The same intolerant and persecuting spirit prevailed in our church, also for many years after the reformation, and is not yet perfectly done away.

That I am not singular in supposing there are several things wrong in the church establishment of this country, is evident from the words of Watson in his reply to Gibbon: "There are many worthless doctrines, many superstitious observances, which the fraud or folly of mankind have every where annexed to christianity, especially in the church of Rome, as essential parts of it; if you take these sorry appendages to christianity for christianity itself, as preached by Christ, and by the apostles—you quite mistake its nature."

Many of our bishops and clergy will complain in private, and some few in public, that various things are wrong and want mending: but there are exceeding few who will speak out, remonstrate, and use their influence, that things may be put upon a more defensible footing. We keep reading what we do not approve—professing what we do not believe, subscribing what we know or suspect to be wrong, and swearing to observe laws, which are truly horrible in their tendency, all our lives long, for the sake of a little paltry food and raiment, and a moiety of worldly honour.—Is this the way to glory, and honour, and riches everlasting?—If Wickliffe, and Luther, and Cranmer, and Ridley, and Latimer, and the glorious army of martyrs, had acted in the manner we do, no reformation had ever taken place. We should have been popish priests at this day. The same spirit that keeps us quiet in our several snug protestant preferments now, would have kept us quiet in our several snug popish preferments then, if such had been our situation. It is much more easy to fawn, and cringe, and flatter, with Erasmus, than face a frowning world, with Luther and his noble companions.

From this view of these two classes of predictions concerning the Saviour of mankind, and the condition of the Christian church in the world, every candid

and sober-minded man, may see, without the smallest room for deception, that there is something far more than human in the prophetic Scriptures. It is impossible to account for all these strange coincidences, upon any principles of nature or art whatever. Here is a long series of predictions running through all time, partly fulfilled, partly fulfilling, and partly to be fulfilled. Let any man account for it, without supernatural interposition. If he cannot, then the Scriptures are of divine original; Jesus is the Saviour of mankind; all the great things foretold shall be accomplished; infidels and infidelity shall be confounded world without end; and sound, practical believers in Christ Jesus, of every denomination, shall stand secure and joyful amidst the convulsion of nations, the subversion of churches, "the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."

"Such, in that day of terrors, shall be seen  
 To face the thunders with a godlike mien,  
 The planets drop; their thoughts are fix'd above:  
 The centre shakes; their hearts disdain to move."

Are not abundance of these predictions fulfilling at this day before our eyes? Is not the religion of Jesus diffusing itself far and wide among the nations of the earth? Did not the corruptions of it commence at a very early period? Did not the church of Rome assume an universal spiritual empire in the seventh century, and temporal dominion in the eighth? (5) Is it

(5) Mohammed began his imposture in the very year that the bishop of Rome, by virtue of a grant from Phocas, first assumed the title of universal pastor, and thereon claimed to himself that supremacy, which he hath been ever since endeavouring to usurp over the church of Christ. This was in the year 606, when Mohammed retired into his cave to forge his impostures; so that Antichrist seems at the same time to set both his feet upon chirstendom together; the one in the east, and the other in the west.

A correspondent, acquainted with the prophetic Scriptures, gives it as his opinion, that we are now in the second period of

not expressly predicted, that the illegitimate empire of that church should continue the precise period of 1260 years? Does it not seem that those 1260 years are upon the point of expiring? Were not great changes to take place among the kingdoms, into which the Roman empire was to be divided, about the expiration of the said term? Have not great changes already taken place in those kingdoms? Were not the nations, which, for so many ages, had given their power unto the beast, to turn against that beast, and use means for its destruction? Is not this part of the prophecy also, in a good degree, fulfilled at the present moment? Have not all the catholic powers forsaken the pope in the time of his greatest need? And is not he, who, a few ages ago, made all Europe tremble at the thunder of his voice, now become weak like other men? Are not the claws of the beast cut, and his teeth drawn, so that he can no longer either scratch or bite? (6) Is he not already in our day, and before our own eyes, stripped of his temporal dominion? And doth not the triple crown, even now dance upon his head? or rather, has he not forever lost his right and title to wear it? Is it not extremely remarkable, and a powerful confirmation of the truth of Scripture prophecy, that just 1260 years ago from the present 1798, in the very beginning of the year 538, Belisarius put an end to the empire of the Goths at Rome, leaving no power therein but the bishop of that metropolis?

the seventh vial. "The battle of the great God has been, and is fighting. The sacking of the nations is come: The man of sin who has been sitting in the temple of God 1260 years, all but a few; whom God hath been consuming with the spirit of his mouth since the reformation; whom he is now ready to destroy with the appearance of his presence, we see is ready for the blow."

(6) The French even took the ring from the Pope's finger, and deprived him of his snuff!

Read these things in the prophetic Scriptures;(7) compare them coolly with the present state of Europe, and deny the truth of Divine revelation, if you can.—Open your eyes, and behold these things accomplished in the face of the whole world. This thing is not done in a corner.

It would be well, if you would seriously consider still further, that the opposers of the gospel are no other than tools and instruments in the hands of that Redeemer, whom you so cordially despise, and rashly reject. He sitteth in heaven at the right hand of power, and laugheth at all your puny and malicious efforts to impede the interests of his kingdom.(8) He permits his word, however, to be tried like as silver is tried. But the more it is opposed, the more completely will it be refined. The more it is scrutinized, the more it will be approved. The severity of your criticisms will serve the cause it is intended to overthrow. Your assistance is advantageous to us, though infinitely dangerous to yourselves. You are co-op-

(7) There is an astonishing chain of prophecy in the Sacred Writings; and the argument thence is invincible. The prophetic scheme may be ridiculed, but it can never be answered.

(8) Would the reader compare the second and hundred and tenth psalms, with the history of those persons who in the several ages have set themselves to oppose either the Jewish or Christian dispensations, he could not fail of receiving strong conviction of the truth of these two prophetical compositions. We may, indeed, deny any thing, and turn into ridicule every prophetical accomplishment, as Josephus informs us the Jews did in the last dreadful ruin of his unhappy countrymen. It was familiar with them "to make a jest of divine things, and to deride, as so many senseless tales, and juggling impostures, the sacred oracles of their prophets;" though they were then fulfilling before their eyes, and even upon themselves.

If the reader is disposed to examine another prophecy, I will refer him to the ninth chapter of Daniel. Ferguson has written a dissertation upon it, which he concludes in these words: "Thus we have an astronomical demonstration of the truth of this ancient prophecy, seeing that the prophetic year of the Messiah's being cut off, was the very same with the astronomical."

rating, unintentionally indeed, with all the zealous servants of Christ, in carrying forward the designs of heaven, in like manner as Judas, with the Jews and Romans, contributed to the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies, and the salvation of the world, in betraying the Lord of glory. The greater the learning, the more rancorous the hatred, the stronger the opposition, the more brilliant the talents of its antagonists, the faster will the kingdom of Messiah come forward, and the more complete and honourable will be the victory.(9) The gospel never triumphed more gloriously, in the first ages, than when Celsus and Porphyry drew their pens; Dioclesian and Julian their swords, vowing its annihilation. Truth fears nothing more than inattention. It is too important to be treated with indifference. Opposition calls forth and sharpens the powers of the human mind in its defence. The cause of the gospel hath ever gained by investigation. Credulity is the bane of it. Sound policy in the deists would let it alone, and leave it to itself. It was by opposition from all the world it was originally propagated. When that opposition ceased, and the great ones of the earth smiled upon and fostered it, a worse than Egyptian darkness of ignorance and delusion overspread christendom.(200) It is by

(9) "Christianity may thank its opponents for much new light, from time to time, thrown on the sublime excellence of its nature, and the manifestation of its truth; opponents in some sort, are more welcome than its friends, as they do it signal service without running it in debt; and have no demand on our gratitude for the favours they confer. The stronger its adversaries, the greater its triumph; the more it is disputed, the more indisputably will it shine."

(200) In the middle age, such thick clouds of barbarity and ignorance had overwhelmed all schools of literature, that the maxim then was—*Quanto eris melior grammaticus, tanto peior theologus.* Espencaus acknowledges, that amongst their best authors, *Græce nosse suspectum fuerit, Hebraice proprie hæreticum.* Zuinglius and Collinus had like to have lost their lives for meddling with Greek and Hebrew. To give the derivation of the word Halle-

a revival of that opposition, and probably too, by a revival of the persecution of its most zealous advocates, even unto death, that it must be purified, refined, and restored to its primitive beauty and simplicity. Philosophical unbelievers, as well as intolerant Christians, will proceed, *per fas atque nefas*, to carry a favourite point. Human nature is the same in all, however modified, and whatever our pretensions.—The pure gospel of Christ, too, never had more determined and well-furnished enemies in these latter ages, than Lewis the fourteenth,(1) Bolingbroke,

lujah racked the wits of whole universities. Doctors of divinity were created and pronounced most sufficient, who had never read the Bible. Erasmus says, divines of 80 years of age were all amazement at hearing any thing quoted from Paul, and, that preachers of 50 years standing, had never seen the New Testament. Musculus assures us, that multitudes of them never saw the Scriptures in their lives. Amama tells us of the archbishop of Mentz, that opening the Bible, he said, in truth, I do not know what this book is, but I perceive that every thing in it is against us. Cardinal Hosius's persuasion was, that it had been best for the church, if no gospel had been written.

The popish clergy all through Europe, are still in a situation truly deplorable. They have had, indeed, some considerable individuals especially among the Jesuits; but taking them as a body, there has been a most melancholy deficiency of literary attainments.

If it had not been for the reformation, most of the riches of christendom would at this day have been in the hands of the clergy. The revenues of the present archbishop of Mexicó are 70,000 pounds a year! The bishopric of Durham is 20,000!. a year; Winchester is very considerable, and some others are the same.

(1) The Roman Catholics, since the rise of persecution, in the seventh or eighth century, have butchered, in their blind and infernal zeal for the church, no less than fifty millions of Protestant Christians of different descriptions. *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel.* A righteous Providence is now taking vengeance on them for their horrible transactions? It is about 300 years since the Spaniards discovered America and the West Indies. The Governor of the world has a quarrel with them for their dreadful cruelties towards the poor, unoffending inhabitants. Twelve millions they butchered on the continent, besides the many millions who fell in the islands. Arise, O God, and plead the cause of these thy creatures.

and Voltaire; never more true and powerful friends. The sword of the first, the philosophy of the second, and the ridicule of the third, have already had very considerable effects. The French themselves at this

And is England less guilty, with respect to her trade in human beings? In ages to come, it will scarcely meet with credit, that we, who boast ourselves of being a free nation, the most religious people in Europe, and the *purest and best constituted church* in the world, should have been capable of buying and selling annually, upon an average, 60,000 souls. If there were no other cause, this is enough to bring down the severest of the divine judgments! No political motives whatever can justify the diabolical traffic. And is it not strange, that when the abolition of this trade had passed the house of commons, it should not be able to pass the house of lords, where are assembled twenty-six shepherds and bishops of souls? Blessings on the head of those few worthy prelates, who pleaded the cause of humanity, and stood forth the advocates of universal freedom!

We have long enjoyed a share both of civil and religious liberty. We have made our boast of this privilege, sometimes very insolently insulting other nations, because they did not enjoy the same. And yet we have the impudence, the inhumanity, the cruelty, the horrible villany, to enslave 60,000 poor helpless souls every year! O England!

“ Canst thou, and honour’d with a Christian name,  
Buy what is woman born, and feel no shame?  
Trade in the blood of innocence, and plead  
Expedience as a warrant for the deed?  
So may the wolf, whom famine has made bold  
To quit the forest and invade the fold;  
So may the ruffian, who, with ghostly glide,  
Dagger in hand, steals close to your bed-side;  
Not he, but his emergence forc’d the door,  
He found it inconvenient to be poor.”

We have also a long and dreadful account to settle with divine Providence for our rapacious conduct in the East Indies. This wonderful country has at the same time enriched and ruined every nation which hath possessed it. The Spaniards, by a just re-action of a righteous Providence, have been enriched and ruined, by the possession of Mexico and Peru. Every man who goes to the East Indies, with mercantile views, goes to make his fortune. This is frequently done, and too often in ways the most dishonourable. In the year 1769 three millions of the natives of Bengal perished for want, through the avarice of a few Englishmen!

moment, are but tools in his hand, to bring forward his designs ; to purge the gospel of its contracted impurities ; to manifest to mankind the truth of the prophetic Scriptures ; to punish the kingdoms for their

“ Hast thou, though suckled at fair freedom’s breast,  
 Exported slavery to the conquered east,  
 Pulled down the tyrants India serv’d with dread,  
 And raised thyself a greater in their stead,  
 Gone thither armed and hungry, returned full,  
 Bled from the richest veins of the Mogul,  
 A despot big with power obtained by wealth,  
 And that obtained by rapine and by stealth !  
 With Asiatic vices stored thy mind,  
 But left their virtues and thine own behind,  
 And having trucked thy soul, brought home the fee,  
 To tempt the poor to sell himself to thee.”

By way of softening our resentment against the traders in human creatures, it may be here observed, that the most polished of the ancient nations were over-run with slaves of the most oppressed kind. Every person acquainted with profane history knows well the miserable condition of the Helots in Sparta.

Even in Athens, where slaves were treated with less inhumanity, they found their condition so intolerable, that 20,000 of them deserted during one of the wars in which they were engaged.

About the year 310 before Christ, the small state of Attica alone contained 400,000 slaves.

Slavery greatly abounded in the Roman empire also. Among them, slaves were frequently mutilated in their youth, and abandoned in their old age. Some, whom age or infirmities had rendered unfit for labour, were conveyed to a small uninhabited island in the Tyber, where they were left to perish with famine. In short, all sorts of punishments, which the wickedness, wantonness, cruelty, or caprice of their owners could inflict, were frequently used.

Such has been the general practice of mankind in every age preceding the introduction of the gospel ! And it is the introduction and profession of that gospel which renders the dealing in slaves so enormously wicked ! A Christian buying and selling slaves ! A man, who professes, that the leading law of his life is, to do as he would be done by, spending his time, and amassing a fortune, in buying and selling his fellow-men !

“ Is there not some chosen curse,  
 Some hidden thunder in the stores of heaven,  
 Red with uncommon wrath, to blast the man,  
 Who gains his fortune from the blood of souls ? ”

abominations; to rouse them from their long sleep of guilty security; to remove all the rubbish of superstition and human ordinances out of the way; and to bring in the reign of universal righteousness, when contending nations shall learn war no more. In the mean time, there is great reason to apprehend, there will be no small degree of human misery throughout the several countries professing christianity, before these halcyon days come forward.

It is a melancholy circumstance, that before the present French war broke out, there were fought, in little more than a century, an hundred bloody battles by land, besides what were fought by sea, between the several Christian governments of Europe. This state of things is awful. It is the pouring out the vials of God's wrath upon the churches. The time, however, is fast approaching, when these miseries shall have an end. The beast shall be destroyed, and his dominion taken away. The several kingdoms which have supported him shall be overturned. False, superstitious, and idolatrous doctrines, rites, and ceremonies, shall all be swept off, and the pure, simple, unadulterated gospel of Jesus shall spring up. The French are God's rod, to scourge the nations of Europe for their unchristian abominations. They are God's besom, and intended to sweep the Christian church of its filth, and nonsense, and superstition, and idolatry. It is true, they have no such intentions: but when the Lord has accomplished his whole work upon the corrupt Christian nations and churches, then he will lay them aside, cause the indignation to cease, and pure undefiled religion shall flourish. This can never be, till the rubbish is removed. The superstitions of popery must first be done away. One generation, or perhaps two or three must first be swept off, and in the course of a few centuries, those, who then live, will see more peaceable, more happy, and more glorious days. But it will be long

ere the nonsensical superstitious doctrines and practices of antichrist, can be rooted out of the several popish countries. And it is exceedingly probable, that infidelity must first become almost general among the several orders of the people, before pure, genuine, purged christianity can prevail. We protestants who have never been abroad, can have no proper idea of the poor, low, silly, superstitious state, in which the minds of the common people are kept, by the mummery and art of the priests in all the catholic countries. In Naples, which contains only about 300,000 inhabitants, there are 300 churches, 120 convents of men, and 40 of women. The mother-church is dedicated to St. Januarius, and when any calamitous events arise, this St. Januarius is applied to, his image is carried about in procession, and thousands of prayers are offered up to this supposed patron, for deliverance. Processions of a similar kind are extremely common at Rome, and all over Italy, and, indeed, all through the catholic world. At Madrid, the capital of Spain, the Virgin Mary, it seems, is the most favourite protectress. Abundance of ceremonies are here continually carrying on in honour of the mother of our Lord. In all Madrid not a single street or house is to be found, which is not decorated with a portrait or bust of the Virgin. Incredible is the annual consumption of flowers made use of in Spain for crowning the Virgin's image; incredible the number of hands, which are continually employed from morning till night in dressing her caps, turning her petticoats, and embroidering her ruffles. Every Spaniard regards the Virgin in the light of his friend, his confidante, his mistress, whose whole attention is directed to himself, and who is perpetually watching over his happiness. Hence the name of Mary hangs incessantly upon his lips, mixes in all his compliments, and forms a part of all his wishes. In speaking, in writing, his appeal is always to the vir-

gin, who is the guarantee of all his promises, the witness of all his transactions. It is in the name of the holy, blessed Virgin, that the ladies intrigue with their gallants, write billet-doux, send their portraits, and appoint nocturnal assignations.

The funeral pomp and parade which characterize the Spaniards at their burials of the dead, is inexpressibly great. Upwards of an hundred carriages, five or six hundred priests, and monks, with at least 2000 flambeaux, form the ordinary appendage of a common funeral.

These things are deplorable, and shew the very low, degraded, and superstitious state of that nation.

The use of the inquisition, however, in that pope-priest-ridden country, is still more shocking than all their other superstitions put together.

What a curse have the priests of christendom been to christendom! How many precious souls have been led into the pit of destruction by an ungodly, superstitious, and idolatrous priesthood! I was almost going to say, that we Parsons have been the means of damning more souls, than ever we were the means of saving! From our profession it is, that iniquity diffuses itself through every land! God forgive us! Instead of being a blessing, and spreading health and salvation through the nations, as is the undoubted design of the gospel of Christ, and the christian ministry, we have been playing into each others hand, have erected a huge fabric of worldly dominion for ourselves, and have brought down, and are at this moment bringing down, the divine judgments upon every country, where we have erected our standard.—We protestants will be ready enough to allow, that this hath been the case in the catholic states:—but it is also true of the protestant bishops and clergy.—We will not sacrifice one inch of the secular dominion we have, through the weakness and folly of men obtained;

no not to save the kingdom from destruction ! The secular and superstitious conduct of the heathen priesthood brought ruin upon the pagan nations ; the secular and superstitious conduct of the Jewish priests brought ruin upon the Jewish nation ; the secular and superstitious conduct of the Catholic priests hath brought ruin upon the Catholic nations ; and the same kind of secular and superstitious conduct of our protestant bishops and clergy will involve us in similar destruction. Nothing can prevent this but ecclesiastical reform ! What reason is there to be given, why a wicked, careless, luke-warm, and secular protestant priesthood, should not be punished as well as those of other denominations. As our light and privileges are the greater ; we may justly expect our punishment will be the more severe. If there be a God in heaven, who regards the actions of men, and who respects the completion of his own predictions, we may be assured the day of darkness is coming, unless prevented by a change in our conduct.

Surely at the present dread period, we, of all people, ought to take the alarm, and use every endeavour to remove whatever may subject us to divine judgments. My daily prayer is, for the safety, welfare, and prosperity of my country. But when I look around me, I cannot help being exceedingly affected at the present melancholy state of most of the neighbouring nations. The sun, moon, and stars, are all darkened ; and the powers of heaven are shaken. And doth not the same power, which hath accomplished, is accomplishing, and will accomplish similar changes in all the continental states, denounce the most complete destruction to the British empire ? What then can save us from the threatened calamity ? Nothing under heaven but national reformation, by which we may engage the divine protection. Hitherto the Lord hath wonderfully helped us ; and I pray God effectually to help us in time to come : but this we

have no solid reason to expect, unless the rubbish of human ordinances shall be removed out of the church, and a very general moral and religious change take place among us. Oh! that I could sound an alarm into the heart of our king, and into the hearts of our princes, nobles, bishops, clergy, gentry, tradesmen; and in the hearts also of all the inferior orders of society! It is reform, or ruin! The 1260 prophetical years are expiring! Reduce the Redeemer's religion to primitive purity and simplicity, or he will come in judgment, and plead his own rights.(2) Let any man, any bishop, any clergyman, say and prove that these things are not so, and I will openly retract all that is here advanced. The popish constitution is overturned in Rome; and 1260 years from this time the Roman pontiff began his secular dominion in that proud and idolatrous metropolis of the christian world, through the expulsion of the Goths by Belisarius the Roman general!—*All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever!*

And shall we be so blind and selfish as to suppose, that all the rest of the nations shall fall, and we alone be preserved?—

We readily grant, therefore, that the corruptions of christianity shall be purged and done away; and we are persuaded the wickedness of christians, so called; the lukewarmness of professors; and the reiterated attacks of infidels upon the gospel, shall all, under the guidance of infinite wisdom, contribute to the accom-

(2) The propagators of infidelity in France before the revolution raised among themselves, and spent no less a sum annually than 900,000 pounds sterling, in purchasing printing, and dispersing books to corrupt the minds of the people, and prepare them for desperate measures.—And similar means are at this moment carrying forward in this country, in no small degree, to accomplish the same purpose. While we parsons are asleep, crying a curse and safety, the enemy is sowing his tares!

plishing this end. The lofty looks of lordly prelates shall be brought low; the supercilious airs of downy doctors and perfidious pluralists shall be humbled; the horrible sacrilege of non-residents, who shear the fleece, and leave the flock thus despoiled to the charge of uninterested hirelings that care not for them, shall be avenged on their impious heads; intemperate priests, avaricious clerks, and buckish parsons, those curses of christendom, shall be confounded; all secular hierarchies in the church shall be tumbled into ruin; lukewarm formalists, of every denomination, shall call to the rocks and mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb; infidels, seeing the prophecies accomplished before their eyes, shall submit themselves to the long resisted, but gentle yoke of the gospel; wicked and openly profane men, of rank, especially, those corrupters and debauchers of the lower orders of society, shall be converted unto righteousness, or swept from the earth with the besom of destruction; the invidious disdain of illiberal sectarists shall be succeeded by equal and universal benevolence; and the Lord Jesus Christ alone shall be exalted in that day.(3) The Bible, stripped of every

(3) It may be very much questioned whether the united wisdom of men be equal to such an effectual reformation in the church as may be thought perfectly consistent with the purity and simplicity of the gospel. We have abundance of things to be removed which are inconsistent with Scriptural model. And if our governors, ecclesiastical and civil, are determined to hold fast what they have gotten, and suffer no abuses to be rectified, the great Head of the church will arise, ere long, and plead his own cause in blood and slaughter. It is morally impossible the present degenerate state of things should continue another century. Without a thorough reformation both in civil and religious concerns, and even such a reformation is big with danger, a much shorter time must subvert the present order of things, not only through Europe in general, but in England particularly.—God grant we may have wisdom to do that of our own accord, which must otherwise be done by constraint. When the iniquity of the Amorites is full, their enemies will receive commission from above to enter their land, and to kill and destroy.

human appendage, shall rise superior to all opposition, and shall go down with the revolving ages of time, enlightening the faith, enlivening the hope, inkindling the love, inflaming the zeal and directing the conduct of men, till the world shall be no more.

“ The cloud-capt tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherits, shall dissolve,  
And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,  
Leave not a wreck behind.”

But the promises and threatenings of the holy writings shall be receiving their awful completion, upon believers and unbelievers, throughout those never ending ages, which shall commence when the present scene of things shall be fully terminated. Therefore,

“ Read and revere the sacred page, a page  
Where triumphs immortality; a page  
Which not the whole creation could produce;  
Which not the conflagration shall destroy;  
In-nature's ruins not one letter lost.”

In the mean time, be persuaded also to reflect upon our respective situations. Suppose we who believe

The charges and denunciations against the several culprits mentioned in the above page, may seem too severe to some gentle spirited persons, who can call evil good, and good evil; but in my opinion, they fall greatly below the propriety of the case. The offending clergy are the curse and the bane of the country, and the wrath of God shall smoke against the faithless shepherds of Christ's flock.—Men of rank are uncommonly blameable. I myself have known some, who have corrupted and debauched the whole neighbourhood where they lived. The late L—d S—h was a pest in this way. The late Sir W—m M—h did much mischief among men and women, all round the place where he resided for several miles. No young person, of more decent appearance than ordinary, could well escape his allurements. Boys and girls were equally his prey. We have many now living, also, who are extremely culpable; and when the scourge of heaven visits the land, it shall fall peculiarly heavy upon such characters.

in the Saviour of mankind are mistaken? Upon your own principle we are safe. But suppose you are mistaken? Your loss is immense. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? You know who it is that hath said too—“ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him—he is condemned already!—Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” Is there no danger to be apprehended from these, and similar declarations, with which the Sacred Writings so largely abound? We are persuaded there is danger, and such as is of the most serious kind which can befall a rational creature.

“ Know’st thou the importance of a soul immortal?  
 Behold the midnight glory: worlds on worlds!  
 Amazing pomp! Redouble this amaze;  
 Ten thousand add; add twice ten thousand more;  
 Then weigh the whole; one soul outweighs them all;  
 And calls th’ astonishing magnificence  
 Of unintelligent creation poor.”

Treating with just contempt, therefore, the scoffs and sneers, for solid arguments they have none, of the whole unbelieving body of our countrymen, whether among the nobility and gentry, or among the vulgar, our determination is, whatever we gain or lose beside, by the grace of God, to secure the salvation of this immortal part. No harm can happen to us in so doing. We are secure in every event of things. If the four sore scourges of the Almighty, the sword, famine, noisome beasts, and pestilence should receive their commission to run through the land, we are yet assured it shall be well with them that fear God. Sound religion, rational piety, solid virtue, and a lively sense of the divine favour, will injure no man. They

will render us respected, at least by the wise and good, while we live, and be a comfortable evidence of our felicity when we die.(4) In the mean time, if it be inquired where present happiness is to be found? May we not say with confidence?

“No doubt 'tis in the human breast,  
When clamorous conscience lies at rest,  
Appeas'd by love divine :  
Where peace has fixed her snow-white throne,  
And faith and holy hope are known,  
And grateful praise erects her shrine.”

After all, suppose there should be no future existence—what do we lose?—But, if there should be a future state?—“and that there is, all nature cries aloud through all her works”—then what shall become of the philosophic infidel; the immoral Christian; and the mere nominal professor? If the righteous scarcely shall be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

“What can preserve my life! or what destroy!  
An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave :  
Legion's of angel's can't confine me there.”

Reflect then upon your situation. Be the Scriptures true or false; be Jesus Christ a vile impostor, or the only Saviour of the world; yet we are undeniably reasonable creatures, and under the moral government of God. This is no mere notion, that may be true or false; but a plain matter of fact, which every man may be sensible of by looking into his own bosom. Natural religion, therefore, at least, must be binding upon us. And that also requires, on pain of the highest penalties, that we should deny ungodliness, all impiety and profaneness—and worldly lusts, all irregu-

(4) When Law came to die, he seemed to enjoy the full assurance of faith: “Away with these filthy garments,” said the expiring saint; “I feel a sacred fire kindled in my soul, which will destroy every thing contrary to itself, and burn as a flame of divine love to all eternity.”

far secular pleasures and pursuits—and live soberly, chastely, temperately,—righteously, doing strict justice in all our dealings, between man and man, and shewing mercy to every child of distress to the utmost of our power—and godlily, religiously piously, worshipping the Divine Being constantly and conscientiously, in public and in private, and zealously endeavouring to please him in every part of our conduct. Deism as well as christianity requires all this. Nothing then do we gain, but a great deal do we lose, by rejecting, the merciful dispensation of the gospel, and having recourse to the religion of nature.(5) For natural religion, equally with revealed, condemns all

(5) What a picture does Voltaire draw of the condition of man? and, indeed, though it is very melancholy, it is very just, upon his own principles.

"Who can without horror," says this sophistical philosopher, "consider the whole earth as the empire of destruction? It abounds in wonders, it abounds also in victims; it is a vast field of carnage and contagion!—Every species is without pity; pursued and torn to pieces, through the earth and air and water! In man there is more wretchedness than in all other animals put together. He smarts continually under two scourges which other animals never feel; anxiety and listlessness in appetite, which make him weary of himself.—He loves life, and yet he knows that he must die. If he enjoys some transient good, for which he is thankful to heaven, he suffers various evils, and is at last devoured by worms.—This knowledge is his fatal prerogative: other animals have it not. He feels it every moment rankling and corroding in his breast. Yet he spends the transient moment of his existence, in diffusing the misery that he suffers; in cutting the throats of his fellow creatures for pay; in cheating and being cheated; in robbing and being robbed; in serving that he may command; and in repenting of all that he does.—The bulk of mankind are nothing more than a croud of wretches, equally criminal and unfortunate; and the globe contains rather carcasses than men. I tremble upon a review of this dreadful picture, to find that it implies a complaint against Providence; and I wish that I had never been born."

Let any man consider this declaration; and afterwards proceed to take a view of the last three months, and dying scene of Voltaire, and then let him say what this old sinner ever gained by his boasted infidelity and philosophy.

immoral men, under the penalty of incurring the utmost displeasure of our Maker.

“ But then you have the satisfaction to think there is no devil: by rejecting the Bible you have at least got clear of this bug-bear, with which we frighten children and old women?”

If we should ask, how you know there is no such fallen spirit? You can give no rational answer. Are you acquainted with all the secrets of the invisible world? Your *ipse dixit* will go no further than ours. We say there is such a being, and we appeal to history; especially to the writings of the Old and New Testaments, the evidence of which is such as no man ever did, or ever can fairly answer. The Son of God, the messenger from the invisible state, hath taught us this doctrine; (6) and we are firmly persuaded, it is acting a more rational part to give credit to his information concerning the invisible world, than to trust to the vague, uncertain, and contradictory lights of a vain philosophy. What have you to reply?—“ There is no such being in nature.”—And so your affirmation or negation is to be the standard of truth!—A little more modesty might become you well: certainly it would make you the more amiable men, and not less comfortable in your own minds.

But, suppose there is no devil; what do you gain?— Still man is a rational creature, and you are under the moral as well as the natural government of the Divine Being. And if you have been dexterous enough to get clear of one enemy, you have two yet left, the world and your own nature—your lusts and passions within you, and the allurements of visible objects without you. Can you deny the existence of these? And are you perfectly sure, that you shall be able to wage

(6) The Bible is full of the doctrine of fallen angels. See Mat. x. 1.—Ibid. xxv. 41.—Mark v. 8, 9.—John viii. 44.—2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.—James ii. 19.—2 Peter ii. 4.—1 John iii. 8.—Jude 6.

a successful warfare with two such potent adversaries?

You see then that when you have hooted the Bible out of the world, proved the virgin Mary to be a bad woman, Jesus Christ to be an illegitimate child, and annihilated the devil—wonderful feats! worthy of all praise!—you must not stop here. There is no safety for you, till you have annihilated the Maker and Governor of the world also. Atheism must be your dernier résort.(7) For if there be a God, every immoral man will be, ere long, a miserable man. You must, therefore, to be consistent, and to obtain composure in your irreligious courses, plunge headlong into the gulph of atheism.(8)—But then, what

(7) Antiphanes, who lived a hundred years before Socrates, hath strongly expressed his expectation of future existence; “Be not grieved,” says he, “above measure for thy deceased friends. They are not dead, but have only finished that journey which it is necessary for every one of us to take. We ourselves must go to that great place of reception in which they are all of them assembled, and, in this general rendezvous of mankind, live together in another state of being.”

(8) Books proper to be consulted against atheism.—Nieuwenhuy's Religious Philosopher—Adams's Lectures on Natural and Experimental Philosophy—Clarke's Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God—Baxter's Matho—Neckar's Importance of Religious Opinions—Bishop Cumberland on the Laws of Nature—Bentley's Boyle's Lectures—Ray's Wisdom of God in the Works of Creation—Wollaston's Religion of Nature—Wesley's Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation—Derham's Physico and Astro-Theology—Cudworth's True Intellectual System—Bishop Wilkins on Natural Religion—Sturm's Reflections on the Works of God—Spectacle de la Nature, by La Pluche—and Fenelon's Demonstration of the Existence, Wisdom, and Omnipotence of God.—This is a fine little work, and worthy of its great author. Swammerdam's Book of Nature—Bonnet's Philosophical Researches—Pierre's Studies of Nature, and Woodard's Atheist Confuted, abound with much ingenious matter in proof of the Divine existence.

I transcribe the names of such a variety of Authors, to inform the less experienced reader, to what books he may have recourse, if he finds it necessary for the peace and satisfaction of his own mind. But there is no proof of the existence of God, and the

will you do with reason and conscience, those troublesome inmates of the human bosom? Can you bring yourselves calmly to believe, that this beautiful frame of nature, which displays so much intelligence, wisdom, power, goodness, justice, art, design, is the work of chance? That admirable piece of mechanism your own body, the meanest insect that crawls upon the ground, nay, the very watch in your pocket, will confute the supposition. You must, therefore, you see, come back to embrace the religion of Jesus with us believers. You cannot find rest, upon the principles of sound reason, in any other system. For though the gospel be attended with various and great difficulties, as every view of both the natural and moral world unquestionably is; yet it is attended with the fewest difficulties, and none but such as are honestly superable; and is the most comfortable and happy institution that ever was proposed to the consideration and acceptance of reasonable creatures. Nothing was ever so pure, so benevolent, so divine, so perfective of human nature, so adapted to the wants and circumstances of mankind. To live under the full power of it, is to have the proper enjoyment of life.(9) To believe and obey it, is to be entitled to a crown that fadeth not away.

truth of christianity, so consolatory, as the experimental and heartfelt knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. Indeed, all other proofs, without this, are to little purpose, and this is independent of every other argument; for though it cannot with propriety be adduced for the conviction of unbelievers, it is calculated to yield more satisfaction to our bosoms than the most laboured arguments that reach the understanding only. Poor people whose minds have taken a religious turn, usually rest their salvation upon this experimental conviction alone.

(9) There is not a single precept in the gospel, without excepting that which ordains the forgiveness of injuries, or that which commands every one to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, which is not calculated to promote our happiness.

Newton has given a demonstration of the existence and intelligence of the Divine being, in the close of his Principia, which

Upon the supposition, that the person, whom we call the Saviour of the world, had no commission from heaven to make the will of God known to mankind, would it not be one of the greatest of miracles, that he and his twelve followers, poor, unlettered, and obscure men, should have brought to light a system of doctrines the most sublime, and of morals the most perfect? that Jesus and the fishermen of Galilee should have far surpassed Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and all the greatest men of the most enlightened period of the world? that every thing they advanced should perfectly agree both with the natural, civil, and religious history of mankind? that their discourses should still be capable of improving and delighting the most learned and profound geniuses of these latter ages? (10) that all modern discoveries should bear witness to the truth of the facts recorded in the most venerable of all volumes? and, that every book in the world, sacred or profane, Christian, Jewish, Pagan, or Mohammedan, instead of lessening should establish the credit and authority of the Bible as a revelation from heaven? (1)

the atheistical reader should consider at his leisure. And to it should be added, Tillotson on the Wisdom of being Religious.

(10) Newton accounted the Scriptures the most sublime philosophy, and never mentioned the word—God—but with a pause. The same is recorded of Boyle. How different the conduct of our minute philosophers?

(1) Whiston, in his Astronomical Principles of Religion, gives us a short view of the reasons which induced him to believe the Jewish and Christian revelations to be true.

“The revealed religion of the Jews and Christians lays the law of nature for its foundation; and all along ~~supposes~~ and assists natural religion; as every true revelation ought to do.—Astronomy, and the rest of our certain mathematic sciences, do confirm the accounts of Scripture, so far as they are concerned.—The ancientest and best historical accounts now known, do confirm the accounts of Scripture, so far as they are concerned.—The more learning has increased, the more certain, in general, do the Scripture accounts appear, and its difficult places are more cleared.”

This is more extraordinary still, when it is considered, that the object of our Saviour's religion is new, the doctrines new, his personal character new,(2)

thereby.—There are, or have been standing memorials preserved, the certain truths of the principal historical facts, which were constant evidences of the certainty of them.—Neither the Mosaical law, nor the Christian religion, could possibly have been received and established without such miracles as the Sacred History contains.—Although the Jews all along hated and persecuted the prophets of God; yet were they forced to believe they were true prophets, and their writings of divine inspiration.—The ancient and present state of the Jewish nation are arguments for the truth of their law, and of the Scripture prophecies relating to them.—The ancient and present states of the Christian church are also strong arguments for the truth of the gospel, and of the Scripture prophecies relating thereto.—The miracles, whereon the Jewish and Christian religions are founded, were of old owned to be true by their very enemies.—The Sacred writers, who lived in times and places so remote from one another, do yet all carry on one and the same grand design; namely, that of the salvation of mankind, by the worship of, and obedience to, the one true God, in and through the king Messiah; which, without a divine conduct, could never have been done. The principal doctrines of the Jewish and Christian religions are agreeable to the most ancient traditions of all other nations.—The difficulties relating to this religion are not such as affect the truths of the facts, but the conduct of Providence: the reasons of which the sacred writers never pretend fully to know, or to reveal to mankind.—Natural religion, which is yet so certain in itself, is not without such difficulties as to the conduct of Providence, as are objected to revelation. The Sacred History has the greatest marks of truth, honesty, and impartiality, of all other histories whatsoever; and withal has none of the known marks of knavery and imposture.—The predictions of Scripture have been still fulfilled in the several ages of the world whereto they belong.—No opposite system of the universe, or schemes of divine revelation, have any tolerable pretences to be true, but those of the Jews and Christians.—These are the plain and obvious arguments, which persuade me of the truth of the Jewish and Christian revelations."

(2) The four evangelists have done, without appearing to have intended it, what was never performed by any authors before or since. They have drawn a perfect human character without a single flaw! they have given the history of one, whose spirit, words, and actions, were in every particular what they ought to have been; who always did the very thing which was proper, and

and the religion itself superior to all that was known among men. These are considerations that ought to have much weight with every man who calls himself

in the best manner imaginable; who never once deviated from the most consummate wisdom, purity, benevolence, compassion, meekness, humility, fortitude, patience, piety, zeal, and every other excellency; and who in no instance let one virtue or holy disposition entrench on another; but exercised them all in entire harmony and exact proportion! The more the histories of the Evangelists are examined, the clearer will this appear; and the more evidently will it be perceived, that they all coincide in the view they give of their Lord's character. This subject challenges investigation, and sets infidelity at defiance! Either these four men exceeded in genius and capacity all the writers that ever lived, or they wrote under the special guidance of divine inspiration; for without labour or affectation they have effected, what hath baffled all others, who have set themselves purposely to accomplish it. Industry, ingenuity, and malice have, for ages, been employed in endeavouring to prove the Evangelists inconsistent with each other; but not a single contradiction has been proved upon them.

With this may be compared the account that Rousseau has given us of the gospel, which is the more remarkable, as it is from the pen of an enemy.

"I will confess to you," says he, "that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers with all their pomp of diction: how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scripture! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the Sacred personage, whose history it contains, should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary! What sweetness, what purity in his manner! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind, what subtlety, what truth in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato described his imaginary good man, loaded with all the shame of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ; the resemblance was, so striking that all the Fathers perceived it. What prepossession, what blindness must it be, to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the Son of Mary? What an infinite disproportion there is between them? Socrates dying without pain

a philosopher, and wishes to be determined in his judgment only by the reason and nature of things.(3)

or ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was any thing more than a vain sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory of morals. Others, however, had before put them in practice; he had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precepts. Aristides had been just before Socrates defined justice; Leonidas had given up his life for his country before Socrates declared patriotism to be a duty; the Spartans were a sober people before Socrates recommended sobriety; before he had even defined virtue Greece abounded in virtuous men. But where could Jesus learn, among his competitors, that pure and sublime morality, of which he only hath given us both precept and example. The greatest wisdom was made known among the most bigotted fanaticism, and the simplicity of the most heroic virtues did honour to the vilest people upon earth. The death of Socrates, peaceably philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for; that of Jesus expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, in receiving the poison, blessed indeed the weeping executioner who administered it; but Jesus, in the midst of excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God. Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty, without obviating it: it is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that only one should furnish the history of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than a hero."

(3) It is truly remarkable, and highly satisfactory to the serious Christian, that all modern discoveries are so far from proving unfavourable to the truth of the Sacred Writings, that they strongly tend to the illustration and confirmation of them. All voyages and travels, into the East especially, are particularly useful in this point of view. Bruce's Travels throw a light upon many biblical circumstances. Maurice's Indian Antiquities, and History

"But, is it possible, any reasonable man should be so weak, as to suppose the book, called the Bible, can be the word of God?"

No intelligent Christian will distinguish it by that name, without a large restriction of its contents. All we assert respecting it, is, that it is a collection of writings, containing a history of the Divine dispensations to our world, and that the proper word of God, with numberless other particulars, is interwoven all the way through these most ancient and invaluable writings.

"Is it to be conceived by any man, who hath the least pretension to common sense, that the several simple relations recorded in the Books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, and those which follow, can be founded in truth?"

Most of our misapprehensions of this kind arise from not duly considering the infant state of the world, the progressive nature of civil society, and the different manners of the several ages and countries of the earth. The customs of the eastern nations, where the Bible was originally written, were then, and, indeed, are at this day, extremely different from our own; almost as much so as between the manners of the inhabitants of the South-sea islands, and those of this country. And while we are wondering at the simplicity of their customs, they are entertaining themselves with the novelty of ours. (4)

of Hindostan, are singularly valuable. Harmer's Observations on divers passages in Scripture, is a work superior to every thing of the kind, as it contains a selection, from a variety of voyages and travels, of such circumstances as have a tendency to illustrate the meaning of a large number of obscure passages in the Sacred Writings.

(4). The character of Moses and his writings is very amply and satisfactorily vindicated from all the usual objections of infidels in the first of bishop Newton's Dissertations on some parts of the Old Testament. Little more either need or can be added to what this learned man hath advanced. If the reader is disposed, he may add Gray's Key to the Old Testament.

“ But then, what occasion was there for a Mediator? Is not God the wise and good parent of all his creatures? and cannot he pardon our offences, and make us happy in the future state, without the interposition of any other being whatever?”

What God can do, what he hath done, and what he will do, are very different considerations. If it were equally consistent with his wisdom and goodness to save mankind without a Mediator, we may be assured it would have been done. But as the Divine Being hath thought proper to institute the mediatorial scheme, we may be assured there are the best reasons for the appointment, though we may be incapable of discovering, and even comprehending, what those reasons are. Indeed, even in this state, few of the blessings of Providence are conveyed to us but by the interposition of mediators. The whole plan of the world is carried forward by the assistance of others. How many mediators must there be, before we can be supplied with our daily bread?

“ If a revelation must be made to mankind, why was it delivered in the historic form? Why was it, not rather given in some set and regular composition, worthy of its author?”

The reason of this must be resolved into Divine wisdom. He, that best knew the nature of man, chose this method in preference to every other; and there is no reason to question, but that the variety of compositions, of which the Bible is formed, is much better adapted to the circumstances of the great bulk of mankind, than any set and regular discourse in the didactic form.(5)

Hervey’s Remarks on Bolingbroke’s Letters on History, contain many pious and satisfactory observations on the history of the Old Testament, especially on the writings of Moses.

(5) Let the reader consult Wakefield’s Evidence of Christianity, where he will find a number of remarks well adapted to display the excellence, recommend the purity, illustrate the character, and evince the authenticity of the Christian religion. See too Cobbold’s Essay on the Historic form of Scripture.

"The books of Moses are thought by many to have been written some ages after his time." (6)

The authenticity of those books is unquestionable, and has been amply vindicated by men every way furnished for the inquiry.

"Though some parts of the books of Moses are written with great beauty and simplicity, yet many of his laws are trifling, and unworthy of a great legislator?"

This objection arises from a want of due attention to the state of the people for whom those laws were enacted. When the circumstances of the Jews are properly considered, the Mosaic institutions will appear to be adapted with the most consummate propriety to these circumstances. It is extremely hard the Bible should be made accountable for our ignorance.

"The character and conduct of David who is called a man after God's own heart, can never be defended by any person who has the least regard to truth and moral excellency?"

It is not the business of these papers to enter into a minute defence of all those parts of the Bible which may seem objectionable. The character of David, however, stands high in our estimation, except in the case of Uriah; and as it has been virulently attacked by some considerable men, so it has been no less ably

(6) Le Clerc was of this opinion in his younger days, but after more reading, and a better informed judgment, he changed his mind, and wrote in defence of their genuineness and authenticity.

"The first, and truly original historians, are those of the Hebrew Scriptures. The ~~Sacred~~ writers, to the unequalled dignity of their subject, unite a majestic simplicity, and even perspicuity of stile and narration. Moses, the most ancient, is the most perfect of historians. His stile is copious, even, and clear. Like a deep river, he bears his reader with a calm and majestic course. It was his purpose, to give a body of laws, as well as a thread of history; and by interweaving them together he has authenticated both; for it is impossible to forge the civil and religious policy of a great nation."

defended. And to such defence, we refer those readers who find themselves concerned.(7)

“ The characters and manners of the ancient prophets were uncouth, and unworthy of God, who is said to have sent them?”

In general, they were moral and religious men ; and their manners were in perfect conformity to the times in which they lived, and the people among whom they conversed. Besides, it is not essential to the character of a prophet of the true God, that he should be a good man. Balaam is an instance to the contrary. God, indeed, in the course of his providence, frequently uses bad men as instruments to accomplish his own purposes.

“ But there are many actions ascribed to the servants of God in the Old Testament, which very much wound the feelings of every good man. Noah was guilty of intoxication ; Abraham of dissimulation ; Jacob of lying ; Aaron of idolatry ; Jael of treachery and murder ; David of adultery and murder ; Solomon of idolatry and lewdness ; and many others of crimes of several kinds ?”

(7) Chandler's Critical History of the Life of David enters at large into the subject, and it is particularly satisfactory. Another learned man says :

“ If we consider David, in the great variety of his fine qualifications ; the ornaments of his person, and the far more illustrious endowments of his mind ; the surprising revolutions in his fortune ; sometimes reduced to the lowest ebb of adversity ; sometimes riding upon the highest tide of prosperity :—his singular dexterity in extricating himself from difficulties, and peculiar felicity in accommodating himself to all circumstances ;—the prizes he won, as a youthful champion ; and the victories he gained as an experienced general ; his masterly hand upon the harp, and his inimitable talent for poetry ;—the admirable regulations of his royal government, and the incomparable usefulness of his public writings ; the depth of his repentance, and the height of his devotion ;—the vigour of his faith in the divine promises, and the ardour of his love to the divine Majesty ;—If we consider these, with several other marks of honour and grace, which ennable the history of his life ; we shall see such an assemblage of shining qualities, as perhaps were never united in any other merely human character.”

The relation of all these instances of wickedness in the servants of God, is a proof of the disinterestedness and impartiality of the sacred historians; and these crimes are recorded, not for our imitation, but for our admonition. If we attend to the consequences of these several transactions, we shall see no good reason to imitate them. It is not any where recorded, that these faulty parts of their conduct met with the approbation of heaven.

“How may the horrible destruction of the nations of Canaan be reconciled with the principles of mercy and goodness?”

Just as pestilence, famine, storms, tempests, and earthquakes may be reconciled with those lovely perfections. The moral Governor of the world is at liberty to destroy offending nations and individuals in any manner he judges meet. We see this to be the constant course of Divine Providence.

“But, you should like to have been eye-witnesses of the mighty works wrought by Moses(8) and Jesus Christ?”

So should we. Has not every man, in every age, and in every country under heaven, the same right to expect this indulgence? Miracles must therefore, be wrought at all times, in all places, and before every individual of mankind. And what would be the consequence? Miracles must cease to be miracles, and the whole course of nature would be thrown into confusion and disorder. So unreasonable are the demands of wayward men!

“Many parts of the Old Testament are extremely dull, uninteresting, and even unintelligible?”

Considering the ages in which it was written; the

(8) The writings of Moses have received much confirmation and elucidation from the learned labours of Sir William Jones, and Mr Maurice. Most of the leading circumstances of the Mosaic history are found detailed, with various degrees of corruption and perversion, among the writings of the East Indies.

different manners which prevailed; the frequency of allusions to ancient customs and circumstances no longer known; considering too that we generally read it in one of the most literal of all translations; it is truly wonderful it should be so intelligible as it is, and appear to so much advantage. Most of our objections to those admirable writings are founded in our own ignorance.(9) Before we set up to be critics upon the Bible, let us make ourselves thorough masters of the three languages in which it is written, and of the customs which prevailed in those countries, and in those ages when it was written. An avowed infidel, with these qualifications, is not this day to be found in England. No person of a serious cast of mind, of pure morals, and a competent share of learning, can be an infidel. Shew us the man of this description, who professedly rejects the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and we shall think the cause of infidelity less desperate.

“ But are there not many contradictions, absurdities, and falsehoods in the book of the New Testament, such as no man can reconcile?”

We deny that there is either contradiction, absurdity, or falsehood, in this inestimable volume.(20)

(9) It is no inconsiderable proof of the truth of some of the historical books of the Old Testament, that the ten tribes of Israel, which were carried captive by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, upwards of 2500 years ago, and which had been supposed to have been lost and swallowed up among the nations through which they were scattered, are now found to exist as distinct people, in the eastern parts of the world, under the name of Afghans. Their traditions are little more than a mutilated and perverted history of the ancient Jews.

(20) “ The holy Scriptures are an adorable mixture of clearness and obscurity, which enlighten and humble the children of God, and blind and harden those of this world. The light proceeds from God, and blindness from the creature.”

This is an observation of Bishop Wilson. If all our bishops and clergy had lived and preached and wrote in the spirit of this

There are, we grant, certain apparent blemishes of these kinds, but not even one that is real. Learned men have vindicated it from these charges with all reasonable evidence. Can we suppose that such a man as Locke would have said, that "it is all pure, all sincere; nothing too much, nothing wanting," if such charges could be made good against it? But supposing the New Testament did abound with both contradictions, absurdities, and falsehoods, this circumstance, though less honourable in itself, would by no means render null the divine mission of Jesus Christ. He might be the true Messiah notwithstanding. Impartial men should weigh this well, before they make the real or supposed blemishes of Scripture a ground of their rejecting the Saviour of the world.

"Why was so severe a penalty as everlasting<sup>(1)</sup> punishment denounced against sin in the gospel? This seems hard, and, indeed, inconsistent with the goodness and mercy of the Divine Being?"

good man, there would have been few infidels this day in England. He, though entitled to the honour, always declined sitting in the house of lords, saying, "That the church should have nothing to do with the state. Christ's kingdom is not of this world."

The public is greatly indebted to the present Archbishop Newcombe, for his learned labours on biblical subjects. This sound scholar declares his opinion to be, that "every genuine proposition in Scripture, whether doctrinal or historical, contains a truth when it is rightly understood; and that all real difficulties in the gospels will at length yield to the efforts of rational criticism."

Though Mill has enumerated more than 30,000 variations in the manuscripts and versions of the New Testament, it is very remarkable, and highly satisfactory, that they do not, when all put together, affect any thing essential, either in the doctrines or precepts of the gospel.

(1) Tillotson has said every thing upon the eternity of the torments of hell that can be known with any certainty. This discourse is well worthy the serious attention of the reader, especially in the present time of relaxed divinity, and more relaxed morality.

Guilty man is an improper judge in this matter. Infinite wisdom hath seen good to denounce such punishment against incorrigible transgressors, and, therefore, we may be well assured, it is consistent with infinite goodness and mercy. If the denunciation of eternal torments will not restrain men from sin, much less would a shorter duration have done it.

“The gospel of Christ bears too hard upon the pleasures of mankind, and lays us under too severe restraints?”

Does it then rob us of any pleasures worthy the rational nature? It restrains us, indeed, but it only restrains us from things that would do us harm, and make us and our fellow creatures miserable. It admits of every rational, manly, benevolent, and humane pleasure. Nay, it allows every sensual enjoyment that is consistent with the real good, and true happiness, of the whole compound nature of man. It enjoins every thing that can do us good, and it prohibits every thing that will do us harm, under penalties of the most alarming kind. Could a Being of infinite benevolence and perfection do better, or act otherwise consistently with those perfections?

“How can we at this distance of time know, that the writings contained in the Bible are genuine? May they not have been corrupted, and many additions made to them by designing men in after ages?”(2)

(2) There are several circumstances still in existence, strongly corroborative of the truth of the Bible. The Mosaic history of the creation is confirmed by the present appearance of things; Noah's flood by a variety of natural phenomena, and the general history of the world: The destruction of Sodom, by the face of the country around, and the ruins which have been discovered; the passage of the Israelites through the wilderness, by the rock that supplied them with water, which is still in existence, and visible to the curious inquirer, besides the names of places, and the traditions of the present inhabitants: the history and prophecies concerning Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, Jerusalem, and

Never were any writings conveyed down with so good evidence of their being genuine as these. Upon their first publication, the books of the New Testament, in particular, were put into all hands, scattered into all nations, translated into various languages. They have been quoted by innumerable authors, appealed to by all parties of christians, and made the standard of truth in every question of moment. We can trace them back through every age to the period in which they were written. And extremely remarkable and consolatory is the consideration, that notwithstanding the innumerable times they have been copied, and the various errors, sects, and parties which have arisen, the corruptions which have prevailed in the church, and the revolutions and convulsions which have taken place among the nations, the Bible has continued fundamentally the same, insomuch that from the very worst copy or translation in the world, we may easily learn the genuine doctrines of christianity. The divisions and squabbles of men have been wonderfully over-ruled to the establishment of God's truth. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (3).

other cities and countries, are all confirmed by the present state of those places and countries: the birth and resurrection of Christ are established by the existing circumstances of the christian church; and it is remarkable, that the cleft in the rock, which is said to have been made by the earth at the crucifixion of Christ, is still visible, and bears witness to the preternatural concussion.

Noah's ark is found by the most accurate observations of modern geometricians, to have been contrived after the very best form for the purposes for which it was intended; and its dimensions perfectly well suited to receive the burden designed for it. It has been calculated to contain upwards of 72,000 tons burden.

(3) Bonnet assures us, after a very serious and accurate examination of the subject, that there is no ancient history "so well attested, as that of the Messenger of the gospel; that there are no historical facts supported by so great a number of proofs; by such striking, solid, and various proofs, as are those facts on which the religion of Jesus Christ is founded."

" But, notwithstanding all the boasted advantages of the gospel, are not many who profess to believe in Christ, and who attend the ordinances of religion, the arrantest knaves upon earth?"

Do you, therefore, infer that the gospel itself is an imposture? Some professors of natural religion are bad men; therefore natural religion is an imposture; there is no God. Some great pretenders to philosophy are knaves; therefore philosophy is all an imposition upon mankind. Some deists are immoral men; therefore the principles of deism are founded in error and delusion. Was it ever known that any man grew more moral, pious, virtuous, and heavenly-minded, after rejecting the gospel? I could produce you a thousand instances where men have become better by cordially embracing it; and we defy you to produce one instance where any man became worse.

" Can any man of an enlightened and liberal mind, embrace the mysterious doctrines of christianity? What must such an one think of the Trinity, the Atonement, the Incarnation, and those other unaccountable peculiarities of that institution, which have been a stumbling block to many persons in every age of the church?"(4)

(4) It appears to me indubitable, that all the real doctrines of religion, as contained, not in this or the other human institution, but in the New Testament, are defensible on the purest principles of reason, without sacrificing any one of its mysterious doctrines. There is no need that we should carry our candour and complaisance so far, to gain the approbation of any man, or set of men whatever.

The mysterious doctrines of religion have caused some sceptical men to reject those Scriptures in which they are contained; others have explained and refined them away. So, because the doctrines of religion have been abused to superstition and folly, abundance of our fellow creatures, without due consideration, are disposed to cast off all religion whatever. Ill judging men! What is human nature, without religion? How horrible the state of the world, without religion? Let Cicero speak its importance to human happiness: " Religione sublata, perturbatio

And are there not also many strange and unaccountable things in the book of nature, and in the administration of Divine Providence, the design and use of which we cannot see? (5) Nay, are there not

*vitæ sequitur, et magna confusio. Atque haud scio, an pietate adversus Deos sublata, fides etiam et societas humani generis, et una excellentissima virtus, justitia, tollatur.*"

(5) What if there should be some incomprehensible doctrines in the christian religion; some circumstances, which in their causes, or their consequences, pass the reach of human reason; are they to be rejected upon that account?—" Weigh the matter fairly; and consider whether revealed religion be not, in this respect, just upon the same footing with every other object of your contemplation. Even in mathematics, the science of demonstration itself, though you get over its first principles, and learn to digest the idea of a point without parts, a line without breadth, and a surface without thickness, yet you will find yourselves at a loss to comprehend the perpetual approximation of lines, which can never meet; the doctrine of incommensurables, and of infinity of infinities, each infinitely greater, or infinitely less; not only than any finite quantity, but than each other. In physics, you cannot comprehend the primary cause of any thing; not of the light by which you see; nor of the elasticity of the air, by which you hear; nor of the fire, by which you are warmed. In physiology, you cannot tell, what first gave motion to the heart; nor what continues it; nor why its motion is less voluntary than that of the lungs; nor why you are able to move your arm, to the right or left, by a simple volition; you cannot explain the cause of animal heat; nor comprehend the principle, by which your body was first formed, nor by which it is sustained, nor by which it will be reduced to earth. In natural religion, you cannot comprehend the eternity or omnipresence of the Deity; nor easily understand how his prescience can be consistent with your freedom, or his immutability with the government of moral agents; nor why he did not make all his creatures equally perfect; nor why he did not create them sooner: in short, you cannot look into any branch of knowledge, but you will meet with subjects above your comprehension. The fall and the redemption of human kind are not more incomprehensible, than the creation and conservation of the universe; the infinite Author of the works of providence, and of nature, is equally inscrutable, equally past our finding out in them both. And it is somewhat remarkable, that the deepest inquirers into nature have ever thought with most reverence, and spoken with most diffidence concerning those things which, in revealed religion, may seem hard to be understood; they have ever avoid-

even some things which to us seem wrong and ill contrived? Yet we own the world was created by God, and that he is the governor thereof. And why then shall we not allow that the Scriptures may be from God, notwithstanding these difficulties, and seeming incongruities? Indeed, a revelation, which we could fully comprehend, would not appear the production of an infinite mind; it would bear no resemblance to its heavenly author; and therefore we should have reason to suspect it spurious. It is extremely probable, that the three grand volumes of nature, providence, and grace, should all, in some respect or other, bear the stamp of their being derived from one source.—Many things in the volumes of nature and providence far exceed our highest powers to comprehend; it is not improbable, therefore, that the volume of divine grace should be under a similar predicament. What doth the wisest man upon the earth know of the nature of God, but what the Scripture hath told him? It may be questioned whether we should have known any thing of him, had it not been for some original revelation.

“ If Christ was so necessary to the salvation of the world, why was he sent no sooner? Why, even ac-

ed that self-sufficiency of knowledge, which springs from ignorance, produces indifference, and ends in infidelity. Plato mentions a set of men, who were very ignorant, and thought themselves extremely wise; and who rejected the argument for the being of a God, derived from the harmony and order of the universe, as old and trite. There have been men, it seems, in all ages, who in affecting singularity, have overlooked truth; an argument, however, is not the worse for being old; and surely it would have been a more just mode of reasoning, if you had examined the external evidence for the truth of Christianity. weighed the old arguments from miracles, and from prophecies, before you had rejected the whole account, from the difficulties you met with in it. You would laugh at an Indian, who in peeping into an history of England, and meeting with the mention of the Thames being frozen, or of a shower of hail, or of snow, should throw the book aside, as unworthy of his further notice, from his want of ability to comprehend these phenomena.”

cording to your own account, were four thousand years suffered to elapse before the Sun of Righteousness arose?"

Very sufficient reasons already have been and may be given, for this wise delay. It may, however, be retorted, if philosophy be medicinal to a foolish world, why were Thales, Solon, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Zeno, Antoninus, Seneca, and other ancient heathens, born no sooner, but men suffered to continue so many ages in profound ignorance, little superior to the beasts that perish? Answer this with respect to them, and you are answered with respect to the Messiah. I add, Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The efficacy of his death extends from the beginning to the end of time. He is an universal Saviour. When any of us bestow a favour upon a fellow-creature, we alone are to determine the time and circumstances of doing that favour.

"If the gospel, and our natural passions,(6) both come from one source, why doth the former oppose the latter?"

While the inferior powers of human nature assume dominion over the superior, no man can be happy. The intention of the gospel is, not to destroy the affections of men, but to regulate, and restore them to due order and harmony, and so to promote the felicity of human life. And, wherever it hath its proper, full, and natural effect, there it always forms a virtuous, respectable, and happy character. The grand intention of it, is to train mankind for glory and immortality in a future state of existence.

"If the human race are all sprung from one original pair, and if the several species of animals, insects,

(6) See a most remarkable deliverance from the dominion of indulged and long continued lust, in the case of Colonel Gardiner. Every man, who is living under the tyrannical dominion of his lusts, and wishes to obtain deliverance, should not fail to consult this extraordinary emancipation. Nothing is too hard for divine grace to accomplish.

and birds, were produced in the garden of Eden, as the Bible seems to insinuate, how is it possible they should be found dispersed into the several countries of the world at an immense distance, and, in many cases, separated by extensive oceans?"

If we refuse to believe in God, till we understand all the difficulties attending his existence, and in Jesus Christ, till we are acquainted with all the mysteries of Providence and grace, we must continue, not unbelievers only, but atheists to eternity. How often must it be repeated, that our comprehension is not the standard of truth? The evidence for the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred records must be the measure of our faith.

"Is it at all probable, that we, and the several kinds of black men, should be sprung from the same parents, as the Bible affirms all human creatures were?"

At first view, this is a considerable difficulty, but it has been accounted for upon principles perfectly satisfactory, which we cannot stop to detail.

"Why is the gospel attended with so many difficulties? and why did not infinite wisdom, if infinite wisdom had any concern in the business, take care to make every thing plain and easy to the meanest capacity?"(7)

Every thing necessary to salvation is plain and easy to the most common apprehension, if we are humbly disposed to submit our will and understandings to the will and understanding of God. And if there are some things in the Sacred Writings, and in the scheme of redemption, difficult to comprehend, it is not less

(7) The religion of Jesus Christ, any more than the dispensation of Moses, was never intended to be free from difficulties. It was rather designed to be a touchstone for ingenuous and curable dispositions. If we are honest inquirers after saving truth, and persevere in our pursuit, we shall not be disappointed. What we know not to-day, we shall know to-morrow.

so in the course of nature, and in the principles of unrevealed religion. But if the gospel of Christ were attended with abundantly more difficulties than it is, still there could be no solid objection against substantial proof. A poor illiterate man, in a dark corner of the earth, has preached a scheme of doctrines and morals superior to all human wisdom, and calculated to make all mankind happy, if all mankind would submit to its authority. This he hath spread abroad to the ends of the world, in opposition to all the powers of earth and hell. Let any man account for this phenomenon, on principles merely human, if he can.

"Has not the gospel been the cause of the greatest misery and destruction to the human race, upon various occasions, almost ever since it was introduced?"

It has. And this is among the proofs that it came from above. The author of it predicted that so it should be. But the gospel itself was no otherwise the cause of misery and destruction to the human race, than as philosophy was the cause of misery and destruction to the inhabitants of France. As in the latter case, it was not philosophy, but the abuse of it, that has done so much mischief; so in the former, it was not the gospel, but a most wicked perversion of its pure and benevolent doctrines, that has produced so much havoc among mankind.(8) And though it has

(8) The Roman emperors of the three first centuries after the birth of Christ, are somewhere said by Jerome, to have martyred 5000 Christians a day every day in the year, except one; that is, they put to death at different times, during those centuries, 1,820,000 souls!—These Heathens, however, according to this calculation, were not half so bloody as the Papists have been.—The infidel philosophers, who are evermore charging the gospel with cruelty and murder; though it prohibits every thing of the kind under the most awful sanctions, by a most tremendous retaliation, have turned their arms one against another, and have murdered upwards of two millions in the course of seven years! Hence

not done all the good that might have been desired or expected, yet it has already accomplished great things for the world. To the Bible we owe all our best laws in our civil institutions. To the Bible, Europe is indebted for much of the liberty which it now enjoys; and little as we may think of it, the Bible too was the means of preserving the small share of learning which was cultivated during the dark ages. We may close these observations in the words of Montesquieu—"To assert that religion has no restraining power, because it does not always restrain, is to assert, that civil laws have likewise no restraining power. He reasons falsely against religion, who enumerates at great lengths the evils which it has produced, and overlooks the advantages. Were I to recount all the evils which civil laws, monarchical and republican governments have produced in the world, I might exhibit a dreadful picture. Let us set before our eyes the continual massacres of Greek and Roman kings and generals on the one end, and on the other the destruction of cities and nations by those very kings and generals; a Timur and a Jencizkan ravaging Asia: and we shall see, that we owe to religion a certain political law in government, and in war a certain law of nations; advantages which human nature cannot sufficiently acknowledge."

"If the gospel is such a blessing to mankind, why, in all these ages, has it not been published in every nation?"

God giveth account to none of his matters, and every man shall be judged according to the privileges which he hath enjoyed, and not according to those with which he has not been favoured. No nation hath any right to the blessing. God is a sovereign, and may

it appears, that vain glorious philosophers have been, and are now, at least as bloody, illiberal, and intolerant, as the most bloody, illiberal, and intollerant of us parsons!

dispense his favours as his own wisdom shall direct. Moreover, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed with it, in the due course of Divine Providence.

“ Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
Till suns shall wax and wane no more.”

“ But if God was the original author of the Jewish and Christian dispensations, why were they permitted to contract such a mass of ceremonial corruptions?”

The fault lay not in either of the institutions, but in the low and superstitious state of human nature. The institutions were good, but the folly of men hath perverted them to unworthy purposes. Is the fountain to be blamed, because the streams have been polluted by the feet of men?

“ Be it so; but why was man created in so low and degraded a state? or rather, why was he permitted, by the benevolent and all-powerful Creator, to sink down into such an idolatrous and superstitious condition?”

This is a difficulty which affects natural as well as revealed religion, deism as well as christianity.—There is no end to questions of this nature.\* With equal propriety may we ask why man was not created an angel, a seraph, a God?

“ Presumptuous man! the reason wouldest thou find,  
Why form'd so weak, so little, and so blind?  
First, if thou canst, the harder, reason guess,  
Why form'd no weaker, blinder, and no less.”

\* These and the like questions affect the very being of a God, and terminate only in atheism.—Why God did, or did not do so, is impossible for us at present to tell. We here see things darkly, as in a glass, or as an enigma. But when the whole plan of Providence shall be developed, as it will certainly be, some time or other, the rectitude, wisdom, and perfection of all God's dispensations will then fully appear.—*Phil. editor.*

"Can you say that Thomas Paine(9) has not brought many very heavy charges against the writings both of the Old and New Testaments, and such as cannot easily be answered?"

We grant this objection. He is a man of shrewd abilities, and has a method of setting difficulties in a strong point of view. But, you cannot help seeing, that he discovers great pride of understanding, much rancour and malignity of heart, and most invincible ignorance of the subject upon which he writes. In his *Age of Reason*, he meant no other than to convert the common people of England to a state of infidelity, and so to overturn the religion of the country. To men of sense, moderation, and information, there is no danger, from his religious efforts ; but there is danger to every reader of his writings, who is not possessed of these qualifications. Watson's *Apology* may perfectly satisfy any man that Thomas Paine is by no means qualified to write against the Bible.— Any fool may sneer, revile, abuse, and ridicule the most valuable objects in nature. The late atheistical King of Prussia has had the impudence to treat the Deity himself in this manner. But what shall the end be of them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?

If the audacity of this infidel were not equal to his ignorance, he never would have attacked the clergy on the score of literature. Where does he find, in any period or country of the world, men of more deep, various, and extensive learning, than are large

(9) Paine's books against the Bible can never stagger the faith of any man, who is well informed upon the subject of religion ; yet they will have great effect upon all our immoral and lukewarm professors of the gospel. But where is the difference between a wicked infidel and a wicked Christian? Immoral men are incapable of happiness under any dispensation of religion whatever. They must be changed or perish. And it is of little consequence whether a man goes to hell as a deist or a Christian ; only, the lost Christian will perish under greater aggravations.

numbers of the clergy, among the several denominations of Christians? Abundance of names are to be found, with whom he is no more fit to be compared, than a dwarf with a giant. One does not wonder, indeed, to hear him explode an acquaintance with languages, when, according to his own confession, he is a stranger to all but the English. To hear him prate about the science of astronomy, and the properties of triangles, is enough to sicken any man of a small smattering of knowledge. Let this empty and vain-glorious boaster call to mind a small number even of priests, who have been an honour to human nature, in point of mathematical, philosophical, and literary attainments, at least—and then let him blush, if he is capable of blushing, at his own vile perversions of Scripture, and misrepresentations of the characters of the friends of religion. Whatever faults some of the clergy may have been guilty of, or whatever defects there may be in the ecclesiastical constitution of this, or any other country, a large number of clerical names will be handed down with honour, as the benefactors of mankind; while his shall be damned to fame, as a base calumniator of the Sacred Writings, and the characters of men much better than himself. What shall we say, when such scholars as Barrow, Cudworth, Wilkins, Pearson, Derham, Flamstead, Hales, Bentley, Bochart, Desaguliers, Mede, Baxter, Chillingworth, Clarke, Berkeley, Butler, Warburton, Watts, Doddridge, Lowman, Jortin, Lardner, Witherspoon, Robertson, and a thousand others, both living and dead, are involved in the censure of this Sciolist?—It is true, the church has had a very long and dark eclipse. Priests have been highly to blame on many occasions. But no age can be produced when they have not been, at least, as learned and religious as any other body of men. There was a time, indeed, when Vigilius was condemned to be burnt for asserting the existence of the

antipodes ; and even so late as the beginning of the seventeenth century, Galileo, who discovered and introduced the use of telescopes, instead of being rewarded for his pains, was imprisoned and compelled to renounce his opinions resulting from such discoveries, as damnable heresies. These are lamentable facts, and the priests, concerned in the persecution, deserved to be hanged. But I will take upon me to aver, that even in this enlightened, literary, and philosophical age, at the very close of the eighteenth century, Thomas Paine himself hath submitted to the view of the world a number of as palpable instances of ignorance, or maliciousness, or both, as ever an insulted public was cursed with, in any one person, who pretended to write for the improvement of mankind. The Age of Reason, as applied to this man's pamphlets, is a burlesque ; it is an insult upon common sense ; it ought rather to be called, the Age of Falsehood—The Age of Infidelity—The Age of Ignorance—The Age of Calumny—The Age of Manianism—or, in short, the Age of any Thing, but that of Reason.\*

\* Paine has generally been a time server. He is violent and dogmatic in his writings, and would write any thing for popularity. But few, if any of his writings will stand the test of strict investigation. Even his Common Sense, is in some places perfect nonsense. When he came to America, about the year 1774, he seemed rather inclined to favour the British. Popularity being on the other side, he soon became zealous for America. At that time he pretended to be an advocate for religion. He quoted Scripture largely in Common Sense ; and in defending that work against the late rev. Dr. Smith, attacked him for burlesquing the Bible. In a copy of verses addressed to the rev. Jacob Duché, then a popular character, he began thus :

" Could all like him the Sacred gospel preach,  
And heav'nly truths in heavenly language teach."

But when he went to France, finding infidelity triumphant, he eagerly engaged in her cause, and wrote his Age of Reason, in which there is nothing new, but its barefaced scurrility.—He was once the panegyrist, then the defamer of Gen. Washington. His character and religion are now equally despised.—*Pbil. editor.*

I will give the reader a few specimens, and leave him to judge.

Paine alledges, that Moses could not be the author of the five books, which go under his name, because they are frequently written in the third person.

Xenophon and Caesar will answer this difficulty.

Paine confounds mathematical with historical evidence.

Any novice in science knows the difference.

Paine confounds also a book that is genuine with one that is authentic.

He ought to have known that the difference is extremely great and important.

He declares the prodigies recorded by Livy and Tacitus, to be attended with as good evidence as the miracles of Christ.

No man of any information can justify such an assertion.

He asserts, that miracles admit not of proof.

Let the reader turn to Campbell on the subject, and judge. The testimony of 500, or 50, or even 10 credible persons, is sufficient to establish the validity of any of the scriptural miracles, where there is no counter evidence.

Paine assures us, that there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch.

No books in the world ever had more affirmative evidence. Watson has brought it into one view. Abundance of the most respectable authors, who have written since the time of Moses, give their testimony to his writings. The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and most of those which follow, all bear witness to them, besides several of the Heathen.

He asserts, that the genealogy from Adam to Saul, takes up the first nine chapters of the first book of Chronicles.

Now any man may see, that the descendants of David to four generations after Zerubbabel, are found in the third chapter; and the succession of the high priests till the captivity, in the sixth chapter, with various other similar matters.

Paine considers the two books of Chronicles as a repetition of the two books of Kings.

This is a very erroneous representation.—The first book of Kings contains an account of the old age and death of David, with the succession and reign of Solomon; the history of Rehoboam, and division of the kingdom; Jeroboam's reign, and several of his successors in the kingdom of Israel till the death of Ahab. It contains some account of Asa, Jehosaphat, and other kings of Judah, so far as connected with the contemporary kings of Israel. The history of Elijah is also interwoven in the same book, with some notice of Elisha.—The second book of Kings finishes the history of Elijah, and carries forward the history of Elisha, with a kind of joint history of the kings of Israel and Judah, and those with whom they had war, till the captivity of the king of Israel by Shalmaneser, and of the king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.

Let us now examine the contents of the two books of Chronicles.—The first book contains the genealogies before mentioned, and the history of David, with the settlement of the temple service.—The second book of Chronicles contains the history of Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, and all the succeeding kings of Judah, pretty much at large, till the Babylonish captivity.—From this short review of these four books, it appears, that the reigns of Solomon and Rehoboam, with some small variations, are common to the books of Kings and Chronicles; but that, in most other respects, they are entirely different.

Paine says, the book of Ezra was written immediately after the Jews returned from Babylon.

He should have known, that it was nearly fourscore years after.

Paine says, Ezra and Nehemiah wrote an account of the same affairs in the return of the Jews from captivity.

He is as much mistaken here as he was concerning the four books of Kings and Chronicles ; for Nehemiah relates few or none of the same events with Ezra.

He says, Satan is no where mentioned in the Old Testament but in Job.

Let any man consult 2 Sam. xix. 22; 1 Kings v. 4; 2 Chron. xxi. 1; Ps. cix. 6; Zech. iii. 1; and say what dependance can be placed on this mistaken man's assertions.

He pretends to prove the book of Job to be the work of some Heathen writer, from the words Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, which are found in our translation. See ch. ix. 9; xxxviii. 31, 32.

In the original Hebrew, however, the words are Hus, Chesil, and Kima. Where then is his argument?

He says, the Heathens were a just, moral people, not addicted to cruelty and revenge, neither were they worshippers of images.

This assertion is in-direct opposition, not only to the Bible, but to the general strain of universal history.

Paine makes himself merry with supposing that we priests are of opinion all the Psalms were written by David, and that he must therefore have composed some of them after his death.

But where does he find any man of character, that asserts they were all written by David? The titles to the Psalms might convince him to the contrary.

He says, priests reject reason.

As a universal proposition, this is utterly false. There are none more reasonable men upon earth, than many of the Christian priests.

He says, almost the only parts in the book called the Bible, that convey to us any idea of God, are some chapters in Job, and the 19th Psalm.

Very possibly. But then, is he not a very fit man to write against the Bible? What thinks he of the 8th Psalm, the 18th. the 24th. the 29th. the 33d. the 34th. the 36th. the 46th. the 47th. the 50th. the 65th. the 93d. the 96th. the 98th. the 103d. the 104th. the 107th. the 139th. the 145th. and a vast variety of other passages, which speak more or less of the existence, perfections, and government of the Divine Being?

He says, "some chapters in Job and the 19th Psalm are truly deistical compositions, for they treat of the Deity, through his works. They take the book of creation as the word of God; they refer to no other book; and all the inferences they make are drawn from that volume."

This declaration is so far from being true, that one half of the 19th psalm itself is occupied in celebrating the perfection of the law of Moses!\*

He says, the Jews never prayed but when in trouble.

That this is a vile slander, see 1 Kings iii. 6—9; 1 King viii. 23—53; and a variety of the psalms, which were composed upon joyful occasions.—The man who can thus wickedly slander a whole nation, is admirably well suited to declaim against the iniquity of priests, and prophets! Bolingbroke and Voltaire were tolerably expert in perversion and defamation, but Paine excels them both in these estimable qualifications!

He says, Ahaz was defeated and destroyed by Pekah.

This is utterly false; he was defeated, but not destroyed. He died a natural death; and the promise of the prophet Isaiah was literally fulfilled.

\* But as this psalm was wrote under Divine inspiration, it must now be extended to include the whole Scriptures.—*Phil. editor.*

He says, the book of Isaiah is "bombastical rant, extravagant metaphor, such stuff as a school-boy would have been scarcely excusable for writing."

Better judges\* than Paine, are of a different opinion. And I challenge him, and all his friends, to produce, from any book, ancient or modern, any oration equally eloquent with the first chapter of this despised book, or any poem more sublime than that in the fourteenth.

He says, the prophet of Judah was found dead by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel.

Where does he find his evidence? He can prove no such thing. There is an old-fashioned book of high authority, which saith—When the devil speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Solomon had his house full of wives and mistresses at the age of one and twenty.

Let him produce his evidence. Where is it recorded?

The infants were not butchered by Herod, because the Baptist was not involved in the destruction.

Paine ought to have known, that the parents of the Baptist did not live at Bethlehem, but at Hebron, which was at a distance.

He intimates that Christ had in view the deliverance of his country from the Roman yoke.

Assertions are not proofs; where is the evidence?

He says, Christ was not much known, when he was apprehended.

Where did he learn this? Produce the evidence.

He affirms, Christ did not intend to be apprehended and crucified.

This is in direct opposition to the gospels from whence all his evidence arises.

\* Lowth, Blair, &c.—*Phil. editor.*

He asserts, that Peter was the only one of the men called apostles, who appears to have been near the spot at the crucifixion.

It is very plain from this, that Paine knows very little about what he is so abusive. Where was John?\*

Paine calls Luke and Mark apostles.

Let any person consult the list of those twelve honourable men, and see if he can find these two names among them.

He says, it appears from the evangelists, that the whole time, from the crucifixion to the ascension, was apparently not more than three or four days.

This assertion shews the most consummate ignorance of the subject upon which he writes.

He says, all the circumstances of Christ's conduct, between the resurrection and ascension, are reported to have happened about the same spot.

Some happened at and near Jerusalem, others in Galilee, which was upwards of fifty miles from Jerusalem.

He affirms that, according to Matthew, Christ met his disciples in Galilee, on the day of his resurrection.

There is a plausibility in this assertion, of which many of the others are destitute, but it is without due consideration.

Paine insinuates, that Christ appeared only once after his resurrection.

Read the gospels, and judge what credit is due to such a writer. He appeared upon various occasions.

He asserts, that we have only the evidence of eight or nine persons to the resurrection of Christ.

Such affirmations merit nothing but contempt. Were not the twelve apostles witnesses of this event? And what does he make of the 500 witnesses mentioned by Paul?

\* Peter was not there at all.—*Phil. editor.*

He says, there was nothing miraculous or extraordinary in the conversion of Paul; he was struck down with lightening.

This is the apostle of infidelity! What strange credulity is necessary to make a complete deist!

Paine affirms, that Paul's discourse on the resurrection is "doubtful jargon—as destitute of meaning as the tolling of the bell at the funeral;" and he has the audacity repeatedly to call Paul a fool.

Locke, Littleton, and Paley, will settle the matter of the apostle's foolishness with this doughty champion for unbelief.

After all these instances of ignorance, falsehood, maliciousness, or misrepresentation, will any person undertake to say that Paine is a wise man?

Paine roundly asserts, "that there was no such book as the New Testament till more than 300 years after Christ."

If priests and prophets are such "lying rascals," that there is no believing any thing they say, I close this long catalogue of strange assertions, by asking—Who is the liar now?

The principal books, of which the New Testament consists, were in existence, and read as sacred writ, from the time they were first composed by the authors whose names they respectively bear. I defy Paine, or any other man, to disprove this assertion.

I give these as so many specimens of the false, ignorant, or malicious representations of this vain-glorious man. It were an easy matter to increase the number. These, however, may suffice. It can be of little use to enlarge the selection. From the whole, it appears, that misapprehension, misrepresentation, false wit, empty declamation, scurrilous language, and bitter invective, are the sum total, that the keenest capacity, and most virulent enmity can produce against the Sacred Writings. I have examined his books repeatedly, and with scrupulous attention, and

I declare, that he has not made good, and fairly substantiated, any one objection to the sacred volume, that, in the smallest degree, affects the business of human redemption, or the credit of the Divine records. He has, indeed, done his best. The book and the authors whom Milton, Locke, Addison, Boyle, Haller, Euler, and Newton had in reverence, almost to adoration, this ignorant and conceited man hath treated with all possible indignity and contempt. We have given the reader a few specimens of his ignorance; we will produce also a few instances of his insolence.—Among other malignant things, with which his pamphlets abound, he says: “The books of Moses were written by some very ignorant and stupid pretenders to authorship.—Moses was one of the most vain and arrogant of coxcombs.—Genesis is but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities, or of downright lies.—Among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man, it is impossible to find a greater than Moses.—The Bible is such a book of lies and contradictions, there is no knowing which part to believe, or whether any.—The book of Ruth is an idle, bungling story, foolishly told, nobody knows by whom, about a strolling country girl creeping slyly to bed to her cousin Boaz.—Wrinkled fanaticism.—Priestly ignorance.—Studied craft of the scripture-makers.—Cant phrase of all the prophets.—Barefaced perversion.—The lying prophet and impostor Isaiah, and the book of falsehoods that bears his name.—The traitor Jeremiah.—Stupidity of the Bible.—A stupid book-maker, under the name of Jeremiah.—the prophets are impostors and liars.—Jeremiah, another of the lying prophets.—The poetical, musical, conjuring, dreaming, strolling gentry, the prophets.—Elisha was a conjurer.—The prophets were famous for lying.—Some of them exulted in cursing.—Frantic writing of the prophets.—The yi-

cious and malignant character of a Bible-prophet, or a predicting priest.—The cant language of a Bible-prophet.—This lying book the Bible.—The virgin Mary was debauched by a ghost.—Matthew was a dashing writer.—The writer of the book of Matthew was an exceeding weak and foolish man.—The sum total of a parson's learning.—Priests and conjurors are of the same trade.—It is better, far better, that we admitted, if it were possible, a thousand devils to roam at large, and to preach publicly the doctrine of devils, if there were any such, than that we permitted one such impostor or monster as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and Bible-prophets, to come with the pretended word of God in his mouth, and have credit among us.—What is it the Bible teaches us:—Rapine, cruelty, and murder.—What is it the Testament teaches us? To believe that the Almighty committed debauchery with a woman engaged to be married; and the belief of this debauchery is called faith.—Fragments of morality are irregularly and thinly scattered in the books of the New Testament.—The obscurity and obscene nonsense of the Testament.—Faith hath its origin in a supposed debauchery.—The descent of the Holy Ghost is such absurd stuff, as is fit only for tales of witches and wizards.—The grovelling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt."

These are some of the flowers of Paine's Age of Reason. If any of my readers find a stomach for such stuff, he is very welcome to it. I envy not his taste. If he would give himself the trouble to read Watson's Apology for the Bible, he will see most of these scurribilities handsomely chastised. I shall only apply the words of one of these Bible writers, as he contemptuously calls them, to the case in hand:—“ Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?—Thy tongue deviseth mischief; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest all devour-

ing words, O thou deceitful tongue ! But God shall destroy thee for ever, be shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him. Lo ! this is the man that made not God his strength—but strengthened himself in his wickedness."

" Some men have called in question the very existence of Jesus Christ, and have contended, that there never was any such person upon earth."

Those, that will call in question whether there ever existed upon earth such a person as Jesus Christ, may, with much greater reason question the existence of Alexander, Cæsar, Pompey, and all the other heroes of antiquity.

" Others there have been, who have presumed to reject the authority of the New Testament."

Those who will undertake to deny the genuineness and authenticity of the four gospels, with the writings of Peter, Paul, James, and John, may with much more appearance of truth, deny the authenticity of the writings of Homer and Hesiod, of Plato and Xenophon, of Horace and Virgil ; seeing there is much more evidence for the authenticity of the former, than of the latter.

" Does it appear unaccountable, that the whole Jewish nation should entertain such a warm expectation of their Messiah's appearance, and that they should reject Christ when he actually did come, if he had not been an impostor ?"

It is well-known, that many thousands of the Jews and religious proselytes, were at first converted to the faith of Christ. This sufficiently proves, that the very general rejection of Christ, was not owing to a want of evidence concerning his mission, but to causes of a different nature.

If it is inquired what those causes were ; it may be replied—Many false Messiahs rose about that time.

This circumstance was calculated to perplex the minds of simple people, and leave them undetermined which was the true. The meannesss of our Saviour's parentage ; his dwelling in Galilee ; his rejecting all worldly honour ; the simplicity of his life and doctrine ; the ignominy of his death ; the sublime language of the prophets concerning his kingdom, but, above all, the general wickedness of the generation in which he appeared ; these seem to be sufficient causes for the rejection of the Messiah, without considering him in the light of an impostor.

Besides ; by the infidelity of the Jews, we gain a large number of unsuspected witnesses to the truth of the Old Testament ; and by their dispersion into all countries, they are God's witnesses, and as a seed sown for the future conversion of the nations: by their infidelity too are fulfilled abundance of prophecies : it is, moreover, a great advantage to the gospel, to have been first preached in a nation of unbelievers: it is a means of making the prophecies more attended to, and more studied; it serves to shew that God did not choose the Jews from among the nations for their own sakes : it is a warning to us to beware of the same infidelity: we are taught by it, that it is not being of any particular nation or church which saith a man : and it is well calculated to correct a vain opinion which every one is apt to entertain, that had we lived in the times of our Saviour, and conversed personally with him, we should have been better Christians, and obeyed without doubt and without reserve.

“ Say what you please, you shall never persuade me to believe abundance of things contained in the book called the Bible.”

Take your own way. I wish not to force your conviction, contrary to evidence. Only weigh the matter seriously and conscientiously, and may the Author of your being direct your determination! — But, suppose you feel yourself incapable of receiving

the New Testament as a religious system, founded in truth, cannot you receive it as a system of morals, founded in policy? This will not make you a religious man indeed, but it may make you a good subject, and a respectable member of civil society. It is well known, that the importance of religion, to the well-being of every civil community, is a point on which the greatest politicians, no less than the most respected moralists, have been generally agreed; and it is an undisputed fact, established in the page of history, that, in proportion as the influence of religion has declined in any country, in that same proportion the state itself has tended to its dissolution. Is not this an unanswerable argument, founded in universal experience, if not for the truth, yet for the utility of religion?

“But, suppose I should be convinced of the fallacy of my own opinions, and the truth of christianity, what must I do? How shall I know, among all the uncharitable and contending denominations of Christians, who is right, and who is wrong, and to whom I should unite myself in Christian fellowship?”

Take the New Testament in your hand; read it diligently, call upon the Lord for direction faithfully, and follow wheresoever it leads the way. Take nothing upon trust; pin your faith upon no man’s sleeve; to the law and the testimony.(30) Believe in Christ,

(30) Few of the sectarians of the present day have departed farther from the scriptural view of things than the New Church. The form of baptism in their Liturgy is this:—“I baptise thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at once Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Their confession is this:—“Dost thou believe that God is One both in essence and in person, in whom is a divine trinity consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is He? I do.”—The Holy supper is thus administered: “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the divine good of his divine love, nourish and preserve you unto eternal life. Take and eat this, in remembrance that the Lord glorified his human, and thereby became the God of heaven and earth.”

as the word teaches; put your whole trust and confidence in him; obey his precepts; worship God publicly and privately with sincerity and zeal; do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your Maker; and look for his mercy through Christ Jesus unto eternal life; and be assured all shall be well.

“ Be all these things as they may, the religion of Jesus is a thing of which you do not approve. He might be a very good sort of man, but his doctrines are not to your taste. If you could only get clear of the Bible, and of priests(1) of every denomination,

One is grieved and surprised, that any set of people, should take such liberties in altering the Sacred Writings. To our own master, however, we must each of us stand or fall.

Some time since, there was a letter written, and addressed to the clergy in behalf of Swedenborg's Theological Works. The letter is written in an excellent spirit. But surely a man of his sense must see the fallaciousness of his own reasoning, where he gives his reasons why the writings he wishes to recommend should be received. The whole force of his recommendation rests upon the reasons there given in favour of Swedenborg's divine commission, and yet those reasons are altogether without any sound and legitimate foundation. What will not ingenious men say, and how far will they not go, to establish a favourite hypothesis?

(1) It is greatly to be lamented, that the clergy, in most ages of the Christian church, have been very generally unfriendly to toleration, and that they should have been the instruments of calling for, or stirring up, the civil power to persecution. Every good and liberal minded man must confess and bewail this misfortune. This spirit, however, has not been confined to ministers of the establishment. Jews, Heathens, and Mohammedans, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, have all, in their turns, when the power has come into their hands, been guilty of the same intolerant conduct. It is human nature, and a part of its disease. But the gospel itself, all pure, and perfective of reasonable beings, is free from the bloody charge. Jesus, the author of it, was the most generous, humane, and amiable of characters. But, alas! we have sadly forgotten, or perverted his institutions. Persecution and bloody deeds are the infallible marks of antichrist. That the Protestant churches should have imitated the beast in this worst part of his conduct, can never be sufficiently bewailed. Every reign almost from the reformation to the revolution, was stain-

you then flatter yourselves we should see happier days?"

The Bible, and the persons appointed by that book to minister in holy things, are unquestionably great

ed with the blood of souls.—Henry VIII. who contrived to remove the Pope from being head of the English church, and put himself in his place, was a vile, tyrannical, libidinous, and bloody wretch. A considerable number of persons were put to death in his reign for conscience sake. Nay, even Edward VI. was a persecutor in some cases unto death, being over-persuaded by those about him, particularly the good, but mistaken Cranmer. Mary and Elizabeth shed much blood on account of religion. James and Charles were not innocent. They stained their hands in blood on the same account. Cromwell, and the prevailing parties during the rebellion, made dreadful havoc. After the restoration, it is computed, that not less than 8000 persons perished in prison, and the sum of two millions of money was wrested from the sufferers. Sixty thousand persons are said to have suffered, in one way or other, from the restoration to the revolution, which was only a period of about thirty years.

All national religions, whether Pagan, Jewish, Turkish or Christian, are national tyrannies. The last began with Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, and continues to this day. And what pliable stuff we Parsons are made of, has been tried upon various occasions in this country.—When Henry the Eighth discarded the Pope of Rome, and made himself Pope in his place, the great body of bishops and clergy followed the example; very few, comparatively, suffered death for refusal.—When Edward the Sixth rejected most of the remaining rubbish of popery, and became Protestant, almost all the bishops and clergy followed his example. When Mary afterwards undid all that Edward had done, and introduced popery again, near 3000 were turned out of their livings, but not more than four or five hundred, both of the clergy and laity, suffered for refusal to join her. When Elizabeth rejected popery, the clergy very generally imitated her conduct. Not more than 200 gave up their preferments. All these changes took place in the course of forty years. But, whoever prevailed, Papist or Protestant, they were steady to their purpose of persecuting those who refused to comply with their tyrannical injunctions. Nay, even Calvin persecuted Servetus unto death; and the gentle Melancthon approved of what Calvin had done. Cranmer was concerned in putting five or six persons to death for their religious opinions, and he himself was at last put to death by queen Mary, for the same cause. A just retaliation!—And, what is worse, the laws of England, in the close of the eighteenth

restrains upon the passions of men; and blameable as our order has been, and, bad as the world is, there is no little reason to suppose, it would be much worse without that order. It is probable you have not well considered what the consequence would be of removing those grievances out of the way: And had we not "better bear those ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of?" Reformation of the decayed, impolitical, and unevangelical parts of the British constitution—not surely the destruction of the whole—should be the ardent wish of every true friend to his country, and to human nature. Perfect liberty, civil and religious, is the birth-right of man. Whatever of this nature is still wanting in this land, might be easily obtained from our government.—No man, therefore, could desire to see his country involved in political ruin, for the sake of obtaining what he may conceive to be some considerable advantages. Enlighten the public mind, and it will not be long before all remaining abuses shall be rectified.

Let us only see Bibles and gospel preachers removed out of the way, an event as some affect to think devoutly to be wished, and the country must undergo every possible calamity. We should be involved in all the miseries that human nature, in a civilized state, is capable of undergoing. And from being one of the first and most powerful nations upon the earth, we should become one of the lowest, weakest, and most wretched kingdoms in Europe. And could any man, for the sake of ridding the country of these bugbears, the Bible and priests,(2) wish to see all this

century, contain bloody statutes in full force. Bloody laws, on account of religion, though of no force, through the liberality of the times, ought to be repealed: but there is a higher reason which should influence the professors of an unpersecuting Master.

(2) It is a melancholy reflection, that among all the clergy in this country, there was not quite 200 who sacrificed their interest to principle, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. In Charles the

evil come upon us? If any person approves not of religion and its ministers, he is at perfect liberty, to decline paying them any attention. He may think and act according to his own pleasure. Why then

Second's time, there were upwards of 2000. clergymen, who sacrificed their interest to principle.

Bigotry and persecution generally defeat their own purposes! What a consequence did not this sad measure give to the dissenting interest in England? The same foolish game was played by the bishops and clergy in the present century. Instead of encouraging, moderating, and regulating the zeal of a few pious young men, in Oxford, by gentle and lenient measures, they shut their churches against them, and compelled them to go out into the highways and hedges to preach to those who were inclined to hear them; and though they were then but a small band, they are now become a goodly company, and have already overspread England, Scotland, Ireland, America, and the West Indies.—All this weight, too, is thrown into the dissenting scale! A few more such imprudent measures, and down goes mother church!

We have spoken of pluralities and non-residence. The former, in all cases, implies the latter. We scarcely ever read an account of deaths in the periodical publications, but we find an account of one or more instances of this nature. The poet Mason, though a worthy man, and a character highly respectable, accumulated several preferments in the church. And it is well known to be the custom of great numbers of the clergy in the establishment, to procure as many as their interest will reach. This we call good management, prudent foresight, taking care for a family, and the like. If there be no God, it is all very well. But if we are accountable creatures, and are to exist in a future state, our present trading in livings and souls will not yield us satisfaction another day. It is popery, rank popery, the worst part of popery, under the highest pretensions of being the most pure and reformed part of Christ's church. Burnet shewed a great deal of disinterested integrity, by vehemently proclaiming against pluralities, as a most sacrilegious robbery. And in his first visitation at Salisbury, he urged the authority of Bernard, who being consulted by one of his followers, whether he might accept of two benefices, replied—And how will you be able to serve them both? I intend, answered the priest, to officiate in one of them by a deputy. Will your deputy be damned for you too? cried the saint. Believe me, you may serve your cure by proxy, but you must be damned in person. This expression so affected Kelsey, a pious and worthy clergymen then present, that he immediately resigned the rectory of Bemerton in Berkshire, worth 200 pounds a year, which he then held with one of greater value.

should any man desire to see this land involved in a destruction so complete? Be assured, whenever it comes it will be promiscuous. The generation then living will be, in every temporal sense at least, to-

All the bulk of church-preferment, in this country, is engrossed by about one thousand clergymen out of the eighteen thousand. Whereas, the emoluments of the establishment are capable of providing for 10,000 persons in a very comfortable way, by abolishing pluralities, without disturbing the present order of things. Let every bishop retire within his diocese, and dwell among his clergy, as a father in his family. Let every clergyman reside upon his living, superintending his people, as a shepherd his flock. And let no man be promoted to the first livings in the kingdom, merely because he is related to or connected with some great personage; but let the most active, useful, and laborious ministers, especially when the infirmities of age come on, be accounted worthy of double honour, by being rewarded for their extraordinary services with the best livings the country affords.

But all this is visionary. It is a plausible theory, but never will be reduced to practice. I think it might be well for the great body of the poor rectors, vicars, and curates of the country, to petition government to take their distressed circumstances into consideration. If it had no other effect, it would call the attention of the public to the horrible monopolies of preferments which prevail among the bishops and higher orders of the clergy. I would recommend that committees should be formed in every district through England and Wales, to correspond with a grand and superintending committee in London. Let them investigate the business of church preferments thoroughly, and drag to broad day-light all the great offenders in this pretended spiritual commerce.

Out of the 18,000 clergymen belonging to the establishment of this country, there are several hundreds of zealous and lively men, and the number is much upon the increase, who, properly speaking, are the only true members of the church of England. They believe, and preach, and live by her doctrines. These conscientious men, however, are almost universally dubbed Methodists, in contempt, by the majority both of bishops and clergy. This is shameful treatment. Those "downy doctors, that recumbent virtues preach," who will swear any thing, and subscribe any thing, no matter whether they believe it or not, for the sake of a good bishoprick, a fat rectory, are among the first to exclaim against their more zealous, useful, and pious brethren.—*Master, so saying, and so doing, thou condemnest us. Woe unto you, ye scribes, pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men;*

tally ruined, and no man shall be able to extricate himself from the general calamity. In that case, and indeed, in every other possible case, the gospel of Christ affords the only sure refuge. It is calculated for both

*for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in! See Ezek. xxxiv. chap.*

“ When nations are to perish in their sins,  
 ‘Tis in the church the leprosy begins.  
 The priestly brotherhood, devout, sincere,  
 From mean self-interest and ambition clear,  
 Their hope in heaven, servility their scorn,  
 Prompt to persuade, expostulate and warn,  
 Their wisdom pure, and given them from above,  
 Their usefulness insured, by zeal and love,  
 As meek as the man Moses, and withal  
 As bold as in Agrippa’s presence Paul,  
 Should fly the world’s contaminating touch,  
 Holy and unpolluted—are thine such ;  
 Except a few with Eli’s spirit blest,  
 Hophni and Phineas may describe the rest.”

As a body of men, the established clergy of this country are by no means deficient in talents, or in learning of any description: and it is probable there never existed the same number, who possessed equal natural and acquired qualifications; but, we are deficient in humility, in self-denial, in piety, and in zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of souls. We want a more serious attention to the grand peculiarities of the gospel; we are deficient in various of those qualifications which are requisite to make us successful in winning souls to Christ. To our shame be it spoken, with half our literary attainments, we suffer the Methodists, and the Dissenters, to out-doo’s exceedingly in real and positive usefulness to mankind. We let the cause of Christ suffer and lose ground in our hands. A large part of our order is inattentive both to religious and literary pursuits. They are mere men of the world. Another part is so occupied with literary and philosophical studies, that they have neither time nor inclination to attend to the peculiar employment of ministers of the gospel. There is a third class of our clergy whose ministerial labours are so cool and languid, and whose public discourses are so merely moral and so wholly unevangelical, that mankind are made neither wiser nor better by their feeble exertions. In the primitive ages, the divine heralds carried the sound of the gospel throughout all lands, from “the British isles to the banks of the Ganges,” in a very short space of time. But we have suffered heathenism to return again into some countries, Mohammedanism to over-run others, and infidelity to diffuse itself among all orders of society. And it is not improbable, but in the course of a few

worlds. The Lord God is a sun and shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory ; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Those that live in the entire spirit, and under the full influ-

more years, the gospel of Christ, *through our neglect, luke-warmness, and superstition.* will be in a great degree banished from christendom. We must either awake from our lethargic state, and return to evangelical principles and practices, or all is lost. Most of the higher ranks of society in this country, both among the clergy and laity, have forsaken the gospel scheme of saving a ruined world ; and the supreme head of the church will ere long remove our candlestick, lay aside the great body of us parsons as a useless set of men, and deprive us of those means of grace, which we have so long enjoyed to so little purpose. The neglect of the Son and Spirit of God, is the master-sin of christendom.

I wish the reader would give himself the trouble to consider well what Wilberforce has written in his Practical View. If we had a number of such able and faithful labourers in the cause of christianity among the laity, much good might be expected to result from their endeavours. Men of this description are peculiarly called upon in the present day, when infidelity is making such rapid advances, and the clergy are in such disgrace, to exert themselves in every possible way, to stem the torrent of iniquity which is ready to bear down all before it.

The corrupt state of the established religion, is the grand and original cause of much of our immorality ; and these two together are the only true and genuine sources of our national distress. Let us remove out of the way every unevangelical stumbling block, and turn unto God in good earnest. The ingratitude and rebellion of the country against the laws of the Divine Being, must terminate in our severe chastisement. The wickedness of the inhabitants is inconceivably great. Compare the lives of all classes of people—with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and how alarming the contrast ! The nobles and gentry of the land, with some few exceptions, are become incurably immoral, as well as irreligious. The trading part of the nation are all set upon their gain. Serious, uniform, and conscientious godliness, is only found among a few solitary individuals. The Sabbath-day is fashionably, and very generally, prostituted to secular purposes. The public worship of Almighty God is grievously neglected by all ranks of men. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is very thinly attended, and this only occasionally, and not as a serious duty and privilege. In short, the signs of the times are such as to give the most serious apprehension to every well-wisher to his country. The French, before the revolution, were extremely inattentive to the sanctification of the sabbath. The nobility and gentry of this island, are almost universally treading in the same

ence of this divine religion, have, even now, large enjoyments of its comforts.(3) And whether we are

steps; and have we reason to suppose we shall not, ere long, be treated in the same manner? Were I an infidel in principle, I would observe the sabbath-day, for the sake of example. For if religion could be proved to have no foundation in truth, it must be allowed to be extremely convenient for the purpose of keeping mankind in order. "I go to church sometimes," said the late infidel earl of Oxford, "in order to induce my servants to go to church. A good moral sermon may instruct and benefit them. I only set them an example of listening, and not of believing." And what injury would his lordship have sustained, if he had both listened, believed, and obeyed? All hypocrites are base and contemptible characters, whatever specious attainments they may possess of a literary, philosophical, or political kind. It does not appear that his lordship, any more than Hume or Franklin, ever gave christianity a serious and conscientious investigation. They were all too busy in life, and had little inclination to religious pursuits. The carnal minds of a nobleman and philosopher, are equally at enmity against God.

(3) Consider the cases of Russel, Morata, Claude, Walker, Hervey, Leland, Romane, Bedell, and Leechman. Instead of this small number, we could have produced some hundreds of characters of a like happy kind.

Burnet's declaration alone we will here transcribe, as he was a man of piety, and of large experience of men, and things, and because he delivers it as his last dying speech, and the sum of all his experience :

" True religion is the perfection of human nature, and the joy and delight of every one that feels it active and strong within him. Of this I write with more concern and emotion, because I have felt this the true, and indeed the only joy which runs through a man's heart and life. It is that which has been for many years my greatest support. I rejoice daily in it. I feel from it the earnest of that supreme joy, which I pant and long for. I am sure there is nothing else can afford any true or complete happiness. I have, considering my sphere, seen a great deal of all that is most shining and tempting in this world. The pleasures of sense I did soon nauseate. Intrigues of state, and the conduct of affairs have something in them that is more specious; and I was for some years deeply immersed in these, but still with hopes of reforming the world, and of making mankind wiser and better. But I have found, that which is crooked cannot be made straight. I acquainted myself with knowledge and learning, and that in a great variety.—This yielded not happiness.—I cultivated friendship. But this also I have found was vanity and vexation of spirit, though it be of the best and noblest sort.—The sum is, vanity of vanities, all is vanity, besides fearing God, and keeping his commandments."

cut off according to the common course of things, or hurried out of the world by the violence of wicked men, still we are fully persuaded it shall be well, They may destroy but they cannot hurt us. They will only send us to our incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance, a little before the time allotted by the course of nature.

It is our determination, therefore, to adhere to the Bible, and the truths therein contained, at the risk of every thing that is held dear among men. We have counted the cost, and hesitate not a moment in saying, it is our glory and joy; dearer to us than thousands of gold and silver.

“ I swear, and from my solemn oath  
Will never start aside,  
That in God’s righteous judgments I  
Will stedfastly abide.  
The world’s contempt of his commands  
But makes their value rise  
In my esteem, who purest gold  
Compared with them despise.”

Sincerely pitying, and ardently praying for, the whole generation of those unhappy persons, who have forsaken the only fountain of living waters, and hewn out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water; with the great Bacon we declare, “ There was never found in any age of the world, either philosophy, or sect, or religion, or law, or discipline, which did so highly exalt the public good as the Christian faith.” With Brown, “ We assume the honourable stile of Christian, not because it is the religion of our country, but because, having, in our riper years and confirmed judgment, seen and examined all, we find ourselves obliged by the principles of grace, and the law of our own reason, to embrace no other name but this, being of the same belief our Saviour taught, the apostles disseminated, the fathers authorised, and the martyrs confirmed.” With Mirandula, we rest in the Bible “ as the only book,

wherein is found true eloquence and wisdom." With Robinson, we say, "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, contain a system of human nature, the grandest, the most extensive and complete, that ever was divulged to mankind since the foundation of nature." With Grew, we profess, that "The Bible contains the laws of God's kingdom in this lower world, and that religion is so far from being inconsistent with philosophy, that it is the highest point and perfection of it." With Hartley, we say, that "No writers, from the invention of letters to the present times, are equal to the penmen of the books of the Old and New Testaments, in true excellence, utility, and dignity." With Boileau, we say, "Every word and syllable of the Bible ought to be adored: it not only cannot be enough admired, but it cannot be too much admired." With Hale, we are clearly of opinion, "There is no book like the Bible, for excellent learning, wisdom, and use." With Boyle, we consider it as "A matchless volume," and believe that "It is impossible we can study it too much, or esteem it too highly."(4) With Newton, "We account the Scriptures of God to be of the most sublime philosophy." With Milton, we are of opinion "There are no songs comparable to the songs of Sion, no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics like those which the Scriptures teach." With Rousseau, every ingenuous man may say, "I

(4) This philosopher says, "Deists must, to maintain their negative creed, swallow greater improbabilities, than Christians, to maintain the positive creed of the apostles. And they must think it fitter to believe, that chance, or nature, or superstition, should perform wonderful, and hardly credible things, than that the great author of nature, God, should be able to do so."

John, earl of Orrery, relation to Boyle, was a lover of truth even to adoration. "He was a real Christian, and, as such, he constantly hoped for a better life, there trusting to know the real causes of those effects, which here struck him with wonder, but not with doubt."

must confess to you, that the majesty of the Scriptures astonishes me, and the holiness of the evangelists speaks to my heart, and has such strong and striking characters of truth, and is moreover so perfectly imitable, that if it had been the invention of men, the inventors would be greater than the greatest heroes." With Selden, after having taken a deliberate survey of all the learning among the ancients, we solemnly profess, "There is no book in the universe, upon which we can rest our souls, in a dying moment, but the Bible." And we therefore boldly declare, before the face of all the unbelieving and disobedient world, in the words of Chillingworth, "Propose to me any thing out of the Bible, and require whether I believe it or no; and seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with hand and heart; as knowing no demonstration can be stronger than this—God hath said so, therefore, it is true." And may we not, finally, exhort and admonish the sceptical reader in the glowing language of Young?

"Retire, and read thy Bible, to be gay.  
There truths abound of sovereign aid to peace:  
Ah! do not prize them less, because inspir'd,  
As thou, and thine, are apt and proud to do.  
If not inspir'd, that pregnant page had stood  
Time's treasure! and the wonder of the wise!"

We treat all your stale cavils, which have been a hundred times repeated, and a thousand times confuted, with the contempt they deserve, and say with the royal psalmist, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine

gold: sweeter also than honey, and the choice drop-pings of the honey-comb.”(5)

We wish to be happy ourselves, and we wish you to be partakers of the same felicity. Many of you are endowed with talents of no mean account. We lament the misapplication of them. Are your spirits perfectly at rest in your present state of mind? And do you feel satisfied with your future prospects? Give me leave to answer for you, and be not offended if I say, “ No!—Far from it!—My lusts and passions lead me captive! I am a slave to evil desires!—Of the proper fear of God, which effectually restraineth from sin, I know but little!—To the genuine love of God I am an utter stranger; I scarcely know what it means!—The favour of God I have no reason to expect, in my present state of moral attainments, be the Bible true, or be it false!—With all my pretensions to virtue, in my coolest moments, I feel condemned in my own conscience!—That which I do, I allow not; but what I would, that do I not; for what I hate, that do I.”(6)

(5) Other great kings have been of the same mind. Robert of Sicily, declares of himself, “ the holy books are dearer to me than my kingdom, and were I under any necessity of quitting one, it should be my diadem ” And even the haughty Lewis the XIV. “ sometimes read his Bible, and was of opinion it is the finest of all books.”

It is recorded too of our Edward VI. that upon a certain occa-sion, a paper which was called for in the council chamber, hap-pened to lie out of reach; the person concerned to produce it, took a Bible that lay by, and, standing upon it, reached down the paper. The king observing what was done, ran himself to the place, and taking the Bible in his hands, kissed it, and laid it up again. This circumstance implied in his majesty great reverence for and much affection to that best of books.

William III. not only believed the truth of the Christian reli-gion very firmly, but was most exemplary, decent and devout, in the public exercises of the worship of God. He was an attentive hearer of sermons, and was constant in his private prayers, and in reading the Scriptures.

(6) Doddridge, in his life of Gardiner, informs us, “ That his fine constitution, than which perhaps there hardly ever was a bet-

" My reason this, my passion that persuades:  
 I see the right, and I approve it too,  
 Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue."

" O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the unhappiness I frequently feel, and the misery I have too much reason to fear?—I would gladly be a thorough-paced unbeliever; but for the life of me, I cannot get clear of the terror of death, the apprehension of a future reckoning, and an unaccountable foreboding of something terrible to come!"

No, nor will you ever find either solid consolation in life, or just confidence in the hour of death, till you shake off the chains of those sins, which have well nigh led you into the gulph of perdition, and obtain redemption in the blood of that Saviour, of whom in your present state of mind, you make so little account.

Solomon has the honour of being reputed the wisest of men. But, notwithstanding his extraordinary wisdom, he was, for many years, at least, guilty of extreme folly. He sought for happiness in the gratification of the body, its appetites and passions,

ter, gave him great opportunities of indulging himself in excesses; and his good spirits enabled him to pursue his pleasures of every kind, in so alert and sprightly a manner, that multitudes envied him, and called him by a dreadful kind of compliment, the happy rake. Yet still the checks of conscience, and some remaining principles of so good an education as he had received, would break in upon his most licentious hours: and I particularly remember he told me, that when some of his dissolute companions were once congratulating him on his distinguished felicity, a dog happening at that time to come into the room, he could not forbear groaning inwardly, and saying to himself, Oh, that I were that dog!—Such was then his happiness, and such perhaps is that of hundreds more, who bear themselves highest in the contempt of religion, and glory in that infamous servitude which they call liberty."—How is it with you in this respect? Trust a prophet and a priest for once—*The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

to the neglect of God, and religion; and the care of his immortal part; but substantial happiness could nowhere be found. He ran through the whole circle of worldly and sensual pleasures; happiness however, and ease of mind still fled before him, and eluded his pursuit. And after having made a large number of experiments for a long season, and to no manner of purpose, he stops and looks back upon what he had been doing; and the book of Ecclesiastes contains his experience. Wishing to warn his fellow creatures against the mistakes which he himself had committed in life, he turns preacher, and gives us a sermon upon the insufficiency of worldly things to make us happy. The text to the discourse is: "vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

He begins his sermon by shewing, that all human courses and pursuits are vain, and do not yield full satisfaction to the mind. "All things are full of labour: man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing; nor the ear filled with hearing."

From this general assertion the royal preacher proceeds to shew, that wisdom, and knowledge, and learning could not make him happy.

"I the preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem; and I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I communed with my own heart, saying, lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and know madness and folly: I perceived, that this also is vexation of spirit."

Not finding rest for his soul in the pursuits of knowledge and learning, the wise man deserts them to try if the pleasures of drinking, planting, building, music, and dancing, could make him happy, and afford him that satisfaction which he had hitherto sought for in vain.—“ I said in mine heart, go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting my heart with wisdom, and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I got me men-singers, and women-singers; and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.”

After making many other observations upon human life, and human pursuits, and shewing how utterly insufficient they all are to constitute any of us

truly easy, content, and happy, the royal preacher finishes his excellent sermon, by pointing out, in a few words, what is the state, the duty, and the true interest of man: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

This is the sum of Solomon's experience and knowledge of men and things; and this is the experience of all the world. Religion is always our last resource. We must come to it one time or other, or we are undone for ever, and had better never to have been born. Nothing can supply its place. The fear, the love, the service of God, can alone make us happy. All other things; all other pursuits; all other pleasures; all other enjoyments, leave us restless, uneasy, discontented, unhappy.

"The soul uneasy and confin'd from home,  
Rests and expatiates in a world to come."

If, to this scriptural sketch, we should add other instances of religious wisdom, amidst all the honours, luxury, and hurry of public station, we might observe that lord chancellor Parker, and the earl of Bath, devoted many of their leisure hours to prayer, reading, and studying the Bible, and afterwards died with a hope full of immortality.

I might call your attention here likewise to a character much more splendid in life, but much less honourable in death. You recollect the extorted and affecting declaration of the degraded, and almost expiring Wolsey:

"Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal  
I serv'd my king, he would not in mine age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies."

Take warning by these examples, and if by any means you have been led astray from the paths of vir-

tue and religion, be sensible of your folly, and turn back with all speed into the way of piety. It may be old-fashioned, but it is safe and honourable. "Keep innocency in future, and take heed to the thing that is right, for that alone will bring a man peace at the last." If you make ten thousand efforts to find rest for your mind in any other way, they will all disappoint you. This is the experience of the whole world. And is it not your experience also?

"What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,  
The soul's calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy,  
Is Virtue's prize."

Reflect upon the workings of your own hearts, in the different periods and circumstances of life, and say what your feelings have been. Was it not better with you, when you were humble minded, and went after the commandments delivered by the Lord, than it is now? Making allowance for the difference of station, may not you say with Madame de Maintenon: "Oh! that I could give you all my experience; that I could shew you the heaviness that preys upon the spirits of the great, (7) and how hard they will find it to put out their days! Don't you see that I pine away with melancholy, in the midst of a fortune, that one could hardly have imagined, and that nothing but God's assistance keeps me from sinking under it?—I protest to you, that all stations leave a frightful void, an uneasiness, a weariness, a desire to know something else, because in all worldly attainments there is nothing that gives full satisfaction. We find no rest till we have given ourselves to God.—Then we find there

(7) An anecdote to this purpose occurs, concerning one of our noblemen, who, being in conversation with a certain gentleman, said, "Oh! how weary am I of this attendance upon court! Had Providence cast my lot among peasants, I had been an happy man."

"Beware what earth calls happiness; beware  
All joys, but joys that never can expire."

is nothing further to be sought; that we have attained to that, which is the only good thing in this world. We meet with vexations, but we have at the same time a solid consolation and peace of heart in the midst of the greatest afflictions."—If this, or any thing like this, is your experience, why will you any longer spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?

" In vain we seek a heaven below the sky ;  
 The world has false, but flattering charms :  
 Its distant joys shew big in our esteem ;  
 But lessen still as they draw near the eye.  
 In our embrace the visions die,  
 And, when we grasp the airy forms,  
 We lose the pleasing dream."

But the grand objects which religion holds forth to our acceptance are adequate to the largest desires of the human mind. They are calculated as well for the present as the future world. We may be as happy here, in spite of all the ills of life, as is for our real good, and hereafter our happiness shall know neither measure nor end. Be not like the people then described by the weeping prophet:—" Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls.—But they said, we will not walk therein.—Also I set watchmen over you, saying, hearken to the sound of the trumpet.—But they said, we will not hearken."

Laugh not at this relation, neither despise the warning given. Stop rather for one moment, and consider upon what foundation you are building your future expectations. Though you reject Christianity, I should hope, you are not so far gone as to disbelieve a state of future rewards and punishments, of some kind or other, but profess thus much at least. Take then into your serious consideration, whether you think your own actions, tempers, and state of mind are such, as will, upon your own principles,

stand the test at the great day of account. It can do you no great harm to reflect upon your condition, to be serious for a season, and to suspect you may be wrong. Consider, that you differ essentially from some of the greatest and best men that ever lived. You stake your eternal all upon the justness—of what? Your opinion:—an opinion, in confutation of which, multitudes have sacrificed their lives, and which many of the first characters now upon earth would controvert with the last drop of their blood! This should stagger your confidence. Myriads of the most learned and moral persons of all ranks and degrees, and of all sects and denominations, would this moment burn at a stake in confirmation of the truth of the Bible, and the divine mission of Jesus Christ. Are they all deceived? Are you the only wise men upon earth? And would you this moment burn at a stake in proof of Christ's being an impostor? Nothing surely but the most palpable demonstration in favour of infidelity should suffer you to sleep one night more in your present state of scepticism and unbelief. If you are mistaken! should you be mistaken! The very possibility is enough to overwhelm the human mind!

“ My hopes and fears  
 Start up alarm'd, and o'er life's narrow verge  
 Look down—on what? A fathomless abyss.—  
 A dread eternity! how surely mine!”

Everlasting existence in misery!—Under the frown and displeasure of the best Being in the universe, without end!—Debarred of light, and the society of happy spirits!—The associates of lost souls, and miserable angels, through endless ages!—*The lake which burneth with fire and brimstone!*—*The worm that never dies!*—*The fire that never shall be quenched!*—Everlasting punishment!—Eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord; and from the glory of his power!

“ Ah! could I represent to you the different states of good and bad men: could I give you the prospect which the blessed martyr Stephen had, and shew you the blessed Jesus at the right hand of God, surrounded with angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect: could I open your ears to hear the never-ceasing hymns of praise, which the blessed above sing to Him that was, and is, and is to come; to the Lamb that was slain, but liveth for ever: could I lead you through the unbounded regions of eternal day, and shew the mutual and ever blooming joys of saints who are at rest from their labours, and live for ever in the presence of God! or could I change the scene, and unbar the iron gates of hell, and carry you, through solid darkness, to *the fire that never goes out*, and to *the worm that never dies*: could I shew you the apostate angels fast bound in eternal chains, or the souls of wicked men overwhelmed with torment and despair: could I open your ears to hear the deep itself groan with the continual cries of misery; cries which can never reach the throne of mercy; but return in sad echoes, and add even to the very horrors of hell! could I thus set before you the different ends of religion and infidelity, you would want no other proof to convince you, that nothing can recompense the hazard men run of being for ever miserable through unbelief.”

You may make yourselves merry with these representations; (8) but you should not laugh where you ought to be serious; vaunt where you should tremble;

(8) When Buckingham was once talking profanely before Charles II. Waller reproved him by saying, “ My lord, I am a great deal older than your grace, and I believe have heard more arguments for atheism than ever your grace did; but I have lived long enough to see there is nothing in them, and so I hope your grace will.”

We have an account of a man of very distinguished talents, well known for the laxity of his principles, and the licentiousness of his conduct, who died lately at a very advanced age. He bore

or sneer where you should argue. In these respects you are unquestionably to blame. If any thing in nature is of importance, it is surely how we may "escape the death which never dies," and attain the end of our creation.—Walsingham judged like a man of sense, when he said to the merry courtiers laughing on every hand of him:—"Ah! while we laugh, all things are serious round about us; God is serious, who preserveth us, and hath patience towards us; Christ is serious, who shed his blood for us; the Holy Ghost is serious, when he striveth with us; the whole creation is serious in serving God and us; they are serious in hell and in heaven; how then can we laugh and be foolish?" We believe these denunciations of Scripture to be the words of eternal truth; and till you have demonstrated them to be certainly false, you are not wise to treat them with disregard.

the advances of dissolution tolerably well, while death seemed at some distance; but when death drew near, his atheistic principles gave way, and he was afflicted with the most excruciating mental pangs. When he stood on the brink of eternity all his resolution forsook him. Though free from pain he became restless and disturbed. His last hours were spent in the agonies and horrors of remorse. He cried for mercy to that God, whom he had wantonly denied; and—there let him rest—till the day of account.

The deistical reader should turn to the seventh section of Priestley's Observations on the Increase of Infidelity, where he will find the spirit of infidelity exemplified in the correspondence between Voltaire and D'Alembert. The resolution of these two deists was to live and die laughing. That they lived laughing, is partly true; but how did these gentlemen die? The tune was changed!

This too was the case with the witty and facetious Brown, who used to treat religion very lightly, and would often say, that he understood the world better, than to have the imputation of righteousness laid to his charge. Nevertheless, upon the approach of death, his heart misgave him, and he began to express sentiments of remorse for his past life. Thus we see, however men may bully and defy the devil at coffee-houses and taverns, they are all the while secretly afraid of him, and dare scarcely venture themselves alone in the dark, for fear he should surprise them with his cloven feet.

"What none can prove a forg'ry may be true;  
What none but bad men wish exploded, must."

You know what pain of body is, and you are no stranger to a greater or less degree of uneasiness of mind.—Experience, therefore, teaches us, that we are capable of such uncomfortable sensations. The goodness of God is not of that nature to prevent human misery. The present state largely abounds therewith. Now, as pain and misery are permitted here, it is not improbable they will be the same in the future state of existence. When only your head or tooth aches; when the gout, stone, or gravel, seize you; or when a burning fever makes your moisture like the drought in summer; do you then despise pain and anguish? When Mirabeau, was seized(9) with his last illness,

(9) Mirabeau has frequently been stiled an infidel. I dare not however, suppose that he was any other than a Christian though possibly of a peculiar cast. If one may judge from his speech, pronounced in the National Assembly of France, on the 14th of January, 1791, concerning the civil constitution of the clergy, he was certainly a believer in the Saviour of mankind, and a most powerful advocate for regenerated christianity. It is probable, that he would have carried it no further than a sort of pure system of moral philosophy.

Speaking of this extraordinary genius brings to my mind a remarkable paper, which was published in the month of October 1764, on the Causes of the Decline of the French Nation. The latter part is so extremely applicable to the present state of Europe, that one can scarcely consider it as any other than prophetic. The close runs thus:

"The parliaments of France are obliged to conceal the strong spirit of liberty with which they are inflamed, under the mask of loyalty, and of attachment to the monarchy. They remonstrate with force and elevation against every measure that tends to the prejudice of the provinces they protect. They can go no further; but they await the moment to strike the blow that shall lay the fabric of despotism in ruins. When this blow is struck, the effects of it will be equal to those of magic. The cottage will be put on a level with the palace; the peasant with the prince. Ranks shall be confounded; titles, distinctions, and birth, shall tumble into an undistinguished heap of confusion. A new moral creation shall strike the view of an astonished and admiring universe."

he found himself so distressed, that he desired his physician to dispatch him by poison. His voice hav-

and France, like old Rome, in her first flights to empire, shall appear with the sceptre of universal dominion bourgeoning in her hands. Out of universal confusion, order shall arise: the great of nature's creating will assume their places: and the great by title and accident, will drop despised into the common mass of the people."

The French revolution is a most amazing and tremendous event, and will probably be a mean of new-modelling the face of Europe, if not of the whole world. The efforts that extraordinary people are making in the arts and sciences, are as vigorous as those they are making in war. The Governor of the universe has formed them for great purposes, both of judgment and mercy; of judgment to the present race of men; of mercy to the generations which follow. This, however, we know, in every event of things, it shall be well with them that fear the Lord.

The serious Christian will remember that these are the days of vengeance for the innocent blood that was shed in France under the predecessors of the late unfortunate king. He acquitted himself extremely well in the last trying scenes of his life; but he was a main support of the beast; and died a determined Catholic: not knowing that this was one of the main causes of his destruction. The doctrine of retaliation, though little attended to in general, is a ~~undoubted~~ law of God's kingdom in the government of the world. A moral governor must be morally just. "He that sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed." The French philosophers have been nearly as cruel to the clergy of France during the revolution, as the clergy, at different periods, were to the Protestants. We are crying out against the wickedness and cruelty of the present governors of that kingdom, but we forget that the kings, bishops, clergy, nobles, and gentry of the land, played the same game, and acted the same tragedy, not very many years ago.—It is the Lord's controversy for the blood of his servants.

Burnet was in France at the time of the horrible persecution of the Protestants under Lewis XIV.

"I do not think," says he, "that in any age, there ever was such a violation of all that is sacred, either with relation to God or man; and what I saw and knew there from the first hand, hath so confirmed all the ideas that I had taken from books, of the cruelty of that religion, that I hope the impression that this hath made upon me, shall never end but with my life.—From the circumstances of it, it may be well termed, *the act of the whole clergy of France.*"

ing failed him, he wrote, "Would you think that the sensation of death proves so painful?" His speech having returned, he said, "My pains are insupportable. I have an age of strength, but not a moment of courage." A convulsion ensued. It was followed by a loud scream—and he expired.

While he was in health he might be as full of courage as you now feel. When the hand of God is upon the stoutest of us, we are soon taught, that all our boasted strength is perfect weakness, and all our vaunted courage perfect cowardice. We may be permitted for a time to carry on the war against God and his Christ; but it will not do. A sick bed, or a dying pillow, will, in all likelihood, bring us to our senses.(40)

(40) A more extraordinary instance of impenitency I have not read, than that of a William Williams, who died in April, 1791. This unhappy man had been extremely wicked in his life. When he drew near his end, being about seventy years of age, he determined to make his will, and leave all he had from his wife and children, alledging that the latter were none of his. But though he bade fifty pounds as a reward, no persons could be found who would sign as witnesses. He desired, when he died, that a pair of clog shoes should be put into his coffin, that he might pound devils and damned souls with them in hell. Being reproved for his swearing and wickedness, he told those that reproved him, that he neither regarded them, nor their new God; he would curse and swear so long as he had breath.—He did so.—He ordered his body to be drawn in his own cart to be buried.—It was so.—He charged that five shillings should be spent at every public house on the road.—Some of it was so.—He desired he might be laid at the corner of the church-yard next the public house, that he might have the pleasure of hearing the company there curse and swear.—He requested that every one of his companions would drink a health, standing upon his grave after it was filled up.—They did so; and continued to drink and make merry over his grave, for near two hours after the interment.

This shews us there are cases to be met with of persons, who are so hardened in their sin, and so totally given up of God, that neither sickness nor death can make any impression upon them. I remember one of this unhappy description whom I both visited during his illness, and interred after he was dead. He was so totally depraved, that when one of his bottle-companions wrote

Or should these be so unfortunate as to fail, a day of judgment will assuredly do the business, which they had left undone.

“ To die,—to sleep ;—  
 To sleep ! perchance to dream ! ay, there's the rub ;  
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
 Must give us pause.”

If man is a reasonable creature, there is an hereafter. And if there is an hereafter, it must be a state of retribution. A moral governor must deal with moral agents according to their moral conduct. The perfection of his nature requires it. *I swear by the Eternal*, therefore, all the denunciations of Scripture shall have their accomplishment upon you, if you prevent it not by a compliance with the gracious and equitable demands of the gospel.

It surely is a very astonishing consideration, that a being such as man, placed on a small globe of earth in a little corner of the universe, cut off from all communication with the other systems, which are dispersed through immensity of space, imprisoned as it were, on the spot where he happens to be born, almost utterly ignorant of the variety of spiritual existences,

to inform him that he was about to die and go to hell, and desired to know what place he should bespeak for him there, he sat down and gave him for reply, that he did not care where it was, if there was only brandy and rum enough. Thus he lived—and, soon after this, died a martyr to spirituous liquors—cursing and blaspheming, notwithstanding all that could be done to bring him to a better mind. Being possessed of two bank bills of the value of ten pounds each, which was all the little property he had left : “ Now,” said he to a person who stood by, “ when I have spent these in brandy and rum, I shall be contented to die and go to hell ! ” He sunk, however, before they were expended, and left just enough to bury him.

These are shocking instances of obduracy, which seem to vie with Pharoah himself, and ought to warn every man how he trifles with the convictions of his own mind, and causes the Spirit of God to withdraw from him.

and greatly circumscribed in his knowledge of material things, by their remoteness, magnitude, or minuteness, a stranger to the nature of the very pebbles on which he treads, unacquainted, or but very obscurely informed by his natural faculties of his condition after death; it is wonderful that a being, such as this, should reluctantly receive, or fastidiously reject the instruction of the Eternal God! Or, if this is saying too much, that he should hastily, and negligently, and triumphantly conclude, that the supreme Being never had condescended to instruct the race of man. It might have been expected, that a rational being, so circumstanced, would have sedulously inquired into a subject of such vast importance: that he would not have suffered himself to have been diverted from the investigation, by the pursuits of wealth, or honour, or any temporal concern; much less by notions taken up without attention, or prejudices imbibed in early youth from the profane ridicule, or impious jestings of sensual and immoral men.

It is customary with you who reject the Scriptures, to consider every believer of them as weak and credulous.(1) Suspend your censures, and reconsider the matter before you form a final judgment.—Do you seriously think, that a man who believes in God, that he is the Creator and Governor of the world, and a rewarder of them that diligently seek him:—that a man who embraces the gospel as a dispensation of mercy, and conducts himself according to the letter and spirit of it, is a weak and despicable character? Can you, in the sober fear of God, esteem all the great men among Christians to have been un-

(1) Let the more solid, rational, and inquisitive deist, who is in pursuit of moral and religious truth, and wishes to have his mind satisfied in the great things which concern human happiness, have recourse to Clarke on the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Religion; and then let him say, whether all who believe in the Saviour of the world, are weak and credulous persons.

reasonable and deluded persons? and that yourselves are the only men upon earth, who have found out true wisdom? Is it probable, that men of your description, who, in general, have never turned your thoughts seriously and conscientiously that way, and who are neither more moral, more sensible, more learned, more philosophical, nor more inquisitive than large numbers of Christians are found to be, should have made the wonderful discovery, that religion is all a cheat, and the Bible a ridiculous tale, trumped up by the priests, to delude and amuse mankind, while many of our great philosophical characters of all professions, make it the study of their lives to comply with the former, and spend a considerable proportion of their time in the investigation of the latter? And it is of no little importance to ask, does your unbelief make you more moral, pure, chaste, temperate, humble, modest, thankful, happy? Are you more amiable in your manners than Christians usually are, better masters, servants, husbands, wives, children, friends, neighbours?

Besides, are you not the most ungrateful of all human beings, in that you have derived the whole of your present peculiar light, information or philosophy, from the writings of the Old and New Testaments, and then make use of that light, information or philosophy, to discredit those writings and to make them ridiculous among mankind? If we want to know what pure nature can teach, we must divest ourselves of all our present ideas, collected from the writings of the Sacred code, and learn our religion from the pagan page alone. The most eminent of them saw and lamented their want of what you now so fastidiously reject.

“ Pure Plato! how had thy chaste spirit ha’ld  
 A faith so fitted to thy moral sense!  
 What hadst thou felt, to see the fair romance  
 Of high imagination, the bright dream

Of thy pure fancy more than realized !  
 O sweet enthusiast ! thou hadst bless'd a scheme  
 Fair, good, and perfect. How had thy rapt soul  
 Caught fire, and burnt with a diviner flame !  
 For even thy fair idea ne'er conceiv'd  
 Such plenitude of love, such boundless bliss,  
 As Deity made visible to sense."

Should you not, as men of sense, review the history of the several ancient nations of the world, and compare their religion and morals with the religion and morals of your own country, where the gospel has been preached for so many years? Common sense, and common equity seem to require this of you, before you commence apostates from the religion in which you have been educated. I shall here call to your remembrance a few facts culled out of the history of mankind. Make what use of them you please. Only give them a patient consideration, and a fair comparison with the religion of Jesus, as exhibited in the New Testament, and then act as you judge meet.

The Babylonians introduced the unnatural custom of human sacrifices. The Sepharvites, probably burnt their children in fire, to Adrammeleck and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

Among the Phœnicians, a father did not scruple to immolate his only child; a husband to plunge his knife into a heart as dear to him as his own, to avert some public misfortune.

In Carthage, the children of the nobility were sacrificed to Saturn. The calamities, which Agathocles brought upon that city, were believed by the inhabitants to be a punishment for the substitution of ignoble blood; and, to appease the wrath of God, they immolated 200 children of noble blood in one sacrifice.

The ancient Germans also sacrificed human victims. Their priestesses opened the veins of the sufferers, and drew omens from the rapidity of the stream of blood.

The ancient Britons likewise were equally cruel and superstitious.

The sacrifice of strangers and prisoners of war seems to have been general, even among the ancient nations which were more civilized.

Achilles immolated twelve Trojans to the manes of Patroclus.

And in the 532 year of Rome, two Greeks and two Gauls were buried alive in a public place of the city, to satisfy the superstitious prejudices of the populace.

Though the Greeks do not appear to have offered human sacrifices, yet whole states were at times reduced to slavery, and their lands confiscated, and their prisoners of war massacred in cold blood.

Conjugal infidelity among the Athenians was become so common in the time of Pericles, that almost 5000 of their citizens were illegitimate.

If at any time a man became eminent among them for virtue, he was generally sentenced to some kind of punishment, either to imprisonment, banishment, or death.

Dark, however, as the picture of the Athenians is exhibited, it is sunshine when compared to that of the Lacedemonians. By the laws of Sparta, a parent was permitted to destroy a weak or deformed child.

The Romans, though great and successful, were equally far from being a virtuous nation. They were the murderers and plunderers of the world. Julius Cæsar boasted he had taken 800 towns, vanquished 300 states, fought three millions of men, of whom one million had been either slaughtered or reduced to slavery.

The number of men slain at different periods, even for their diversion and entertainment, was immense!

A creditor could, at the expiration of thirty days, seize an insolvent debtor, who could not find bail,

and keep him sixty days in chains. During this time, he was allowed to expose him three market days at public sale, for the amount of his debt, and, at the expiration of a third, to put him to death. If there were many creditors, they were permitted to tear and divide his body among them. It was customary, however, to sell the debtor, and divide the money.

A father had the right of life and death over his children, and, by the laws of Rome, was permitted to expose his child to perish.

The husband was the only judge and arbiter of his wife's fate. If a wife was convicted of committing adultery, or of drinking wine, her husband had a right to put her to death without the formality of a public trial; while she was not permitted, on any provocation, to raise her finger against him.

To these several facts, add a careful perusal of the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and you will have had a view of the religion and morals of the heathen world before the advent of Christ. If there be a difference between us and them, it is what the gospel has made. The heathens excelled greatly in the arts and sciences. Excellence of composition may be produced from their writings, in rich abundance; but shew us any thing fit to be compared with various of the compositions contained in the Bible. You have no history so ancient, so important, so instructive, so entertaining, so well written; (2) no

(2) The finest and most important passage in Heathen Antiquity, is that of Plato, where he introduces Socrates speaking of some divine teacher of whom he was in expectation, and of the mist which is naturally upon the mind of man, which was to be removed by that teacher. "He is one," says Socrates, "who has now a concern for us. He is a person that has a wonderful readiness and willingness to take away the mist from the mind of man, and to enable us to distinguish rightly between good and evil."

Hall says, "I durst appeal to the judgment of a carnal reader, that there is no history so pleasant as the Sacred; for should we

poetry so sublime; no eloquence so noble and persuasive: no proverbs so laconic, so divine, so useful; no morality so pure and perfective of human nature; no system of the intellectual world so rational.—We challenge you, we dare you to come forward, and shew us any thing of equal excellence, in all the authors of antiquity, or among all the stores of modern refinement.(3) You ought then to be ashamed of your conduct, in treating with such indignity and contempt, writings which were never excelled, never equalled; and which you have never given yourselves time thoroughly to understand. Your conduct is extremely culpable, and cannot be justified, either on the principles of religion or philosophy. Any man possessed of one grain of modesty, and gratitude to heaven, could not help seeing the impropriety of it.

A timely attention to one of *Solomon's jests*,(4) might do all such persons everlasting good:—“Judg-

even set aside the majesty of the inditer, none can compare with it for magnificence, and the antiquity of the matter; the sweetness of compiling; and the strange variety of memorable occurrences.”

“I am very confident,” saith Steel, “whoever reads the gospels, with a heart as much prepared in favour of them, as when he sits down to Virgil or Homer, will find no passage there which is not told with more natural force, than any episode in either of those wits, who were the chief of mere mankind.”

Locke observes that morality becomes a gentleman, not barely as a man, but in order to do his business as a gentleman; and the morality of the gospel “doth so excel that of all other books, that to give a man a full knowledge of true morality, I should send him to no other book but the New Testament.”

(3) If any person wish to be informed where he may find the literary beauties of the Holy Scriptures pointed out to him; Boyle on the Stile of Scripture—Blackwall's Sacred Classics—and Lowth's *Prælectiones*, are all very valuable in this way.—Hervey's Works contain many beautiful specimens of Sacred criticism.—Smith's *Longinus*—Blair's *Lectures*—Rollin's *Belles Lettres*—Weald's *Christian Orator*—and the second volume of the *Adventurer*—all contain several good illustrations. Some instances of the same kind will be met with in the *Spectator* and *Guardian*.

(4) Paine, to shew his wit, calls *Solomon's Proverbs* a jest-book.

ments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools!" "I can write," says Paine, "a better book than the Bible myself." We grant this gentleman every merit to which he is entitled; but I cannot help recommending to his attention, and that of his friends, another of this Jewish king's *witty* sayings: "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him!" Many other *jest*s, uttered by this sagacious monarch, are equally *funny* with these two, and perfectly applicable to such characters as Paine, and our other vaunting philosophisters. Deists might be abundantly gratified with others of a similar kind, by having recourse to the *jest-book* itself, to which I recommend them with all speed to apply. A serious application to a book of such admirable *humour* could not fail of yielding most exquisite entertainment!

How different are the opinions of Paine, and Sir William Jones(5) concerning the Sacred Writings?

(5) Before this illustrious scholar went to India, he was by no means free from a sceptical bias. But when he resided in Asia, he investigated, with minute and rigid attention, all those intricate theological points which had occasioned his doubts; and the result was, not only his own most complete conviction, but the conviction of several eminent scholars, who, till then, had but slightly attended to the proofs for the verity of the Mosaic Writings. These gentlemen, from that time renounced their doubts and errors, and became, like himself, not only almost, but altogether Christians.

This declaration was written in one of the blank leaves of his common reading Bible. He has advanced the same sentiments more at large:—"Theological inquiries are no part of my present subject; but I cannot refrain from adding, that the collection of tracts, which we call from their excellence the Scriptures, contain, independently of a Divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass from all other books that were ever composed in any age, or in any idiom. The two parts, of which the Scriptures consist, are connected by a chain of compositions, which bear no resemblance in form or stile to any that can be produced from the stores of Grecian, Indian, Persian, or even Ara-

The former, who has betrayed the most palpable ignorance, says all manner of evil against them; while the latter, who was an all-accomplished scholar, seems at a loss how sufficiently to express the sense he had of their importance. "I have regularly and attentively read the Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion, this volume, independent of its divine origin, contains more sublimity and beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language or age they may have been composed."

Is it not strange that these contemptible writers, as Paine affects to consider them, should excel all mankind in every sort of composition? They must have been extremely dexterous impostors! Christ, the most pious and moral of men; the most ingenuous of deceivers! His apostles, the most ignorant and illiterate of mortals, the wisest and most admirable of writers! What paradoxes a man must embrace before he can become a finished infidel!

If then such are the superior excellencies of the Bible; though you find yourselves incapable of receiving it as composed by divine assistance for the instruction and salvation of mankind, you will do yourselves a very serious injury by exploding it in every other point of view. Read it, if it is only as

bian learning. The antiquity of those compositions no man doubts; and the unrestrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication is a solid ground of belief, that they were genuine predictions, and consequently *inspired*."

The last hour of the life of this illustrious character, who was particularly eminent for his attainments in astronomy, chronology, antiquities, languages, music, botany, and law, was marked with a solemn act of devotion. Finding his dissolution rapidly approaching, he desired his attendants to carry him into an inner apartment, where, at his desire, they left him. Returning after a short interval, they found him in a kneeling posture, with his hands clasped, and eyes fixed towards heaven. As they were removing him, he expired.

a collection of compositions more ancient, more curious, more excellent, more entertaining, and more important, than any other extant. This is a merit you must allow it to possess, if your mind be ever so little improved in literary attainments. And if this is not your situation, you are ill qualified to judge of the truth or falsehood of a book of such vast antiquity, and which claims derivation from heaven. Several good scholars used to read the Sacred code, merely as a book of entertainment. Others have read it to raise and sublime their minds. Some read it for its history, some for its poetry, some for its eloquence, some for its morality, some for its maxims, some for its sublime views of the Supreme Being, some for the inimitable examples which it affords us of virtue and vice. Be it then true or false, as a system of divine revelation, let it have its due praise, and hold the rank among books to which it is so justly entitled(6) Give every author the honour due unto him, and sing with our epic bard :

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“ Yet not the more  
 Cease I to wander, where the muses haunt,  
 Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,  
 Smit with the love of Sacred song ; but chief  
 Thee, Sion, and the flow’ry brooks beneath  
 That wash thy hallow’d feet, and warbling flow,  
 Nightly I visit.”

This book, which you are unhappy enough to despise, abounds with all the various beauties of the Greek and Roman classics, and in a much higher degree of perfection. It consists, not merely of a collection of chapters, and verses, and distinct aphorisms

(6) The beauties of composition to be met with in the Sacred Writings are beyond all praise. It is a neglect unpardonable in classical schools, that they are not read there, as the standard of good taste and of fine Writings, as well as of sound morals and religion.—If they abound with such numerous specimens of noble composition in the most literal of all translations, let any man judge what they must be in the original !

on trivial subjects, as too many are apt to conceive; but is one grand epic composition, forming sixty-six books, of unequal lengths, and various importance. As the sun, moon, planets, and comets, make one system, and are each of them necessary to the harmony of the whole; so the different books of the Sacred code, though separately considered, and taken out of their connection, may appear unimportant; yet as parts of one large and complicated system, they are all necessary, useful, or convenient to the perfection of the whole. And though the time is longer than is usually admitted in compositions of the epic kind, its beginning being with the birth, and its end with the close of nature itself; yet even this circumstance is perfectly consistent with the rest of the adorable plan; a thousand years being with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years. The action of it too is one, entire, and the greatest that can be conceived. All the beings in the universe, of which we have any knowledge, are concerned in the drama.—The design of it is to display the perfections of the adorable Creator; to rescue the human race from total misery and ruin: and to form us, by example, to glory, honour, and immortality. The epic opens in a mild and calm sublimity, with the creation of the world itself. It is carried on with an astonishing variety of incidents, and unparalleled simplicity and majesty of language.(7) The least and most trivial episode, or under-actions, which are interwoven in it, are parts either necessary, or con-

(7) "The graceful negligence of nature pleases beyond the truest ornaments that art can devise. Indeed, they are then truest, when they approach the nearest to this negligence. To attain it, is the very triumph of art. The wise artist always completes his studies in the great school of creation, where the forms of elegance lie scattered in an endless variety: and the writer, who wishes to possess some portion of that sovereign excellence, and simplicity, even though he were an infidel, would have recourse to the Scriptures, and make them his model."

venient, to forward the main design ; either so necessary, that without them the work must be imperfect, or so convenient that no others can be imagined more suitable to the place in which they are. And it closes with a book, or, to keep up the figure, with a scene, the most solemn, majestic, and sublime, that ever was composed by any author, sacred or profane.

“ The human mind can conceive nothing more elevated, more grand, more glowing, more beautiful, and more elegant, than what we meet with in the Sacred Writings of the Hebrew bards. The almost ineffable sublimity of the subjects they treat upon, is fully equalled by the energy of the language, and the dignity of the stile. Some of these writings too, exceed in antiquity the fabulous ages of Greece, as much as in sublimity they are superior to the most finished productions of that celebrated people.” Moses stands unrivalled by the best of them, both as a poet, orator, and historian: (8) David as a poet (9) and musician: Solomon as a moralist, naturalist, and pastoral writer: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nahum, Joel, and some other of the prophets, as orators, or poets, or both: Homer and Virgil must yield the palm to Job for true sublime: Isaiah excels all the world in almost every kind of composition: the four evangelists are eminent as orators and historians: Peter and James, Luke and John, are authors of no ordinary rank: and Paul is the most sublime of writers,

(8) Longinus, the best critic of the heathen world, speaks of Moses as no ordinary writer, and cites his account of the creation as an instance of the true sublime.

(9) Addison says, “ After perusing the book of Psalms, let a judge of the beauties of poetry read a literal translation of Horace or Pindar, and he will find in these two last such an absurdity and confusion of stile, with such a comparative poverty of imagination, as will make him sensible of the vast superiority of Scripture stile.”

and eloquent of orators.(50) All these eulogiums upon the sacred penmen are spoken of them merely as authors, without the smallest view to their higher order as inspired writers, and messengers of the Lord of Hosts.(1) If this last consideration be taken into the account, and added to the former, what an all-important book must the Bible be? what a blessing to mankind? Language cannot express the value of it. If the exhortation of a late author, as improperly applied to the Grecian bard, were applied to this inestimable volume, it would be used with the strictest propriety and decorum!

“ Read God’s word, once, and you can read no more ;  
 For all books else appear so mean, so poor.  
 Verse will seem prose : but still persist to read,  
 And God’s word will be all the books you need.”

The Bible abounds with a vast variety of matter, a confused magnificence above all order; and is the fittest book in the world to be the standard of doctrines, and the model of good writing. We defy all the sons of infidelity to shew us any thing like it, or second to it. Where will you meet with such a number of instructive proverbs—fervent prayers—sublime songs—beneficent miracles—apposite parables—infallible prophecies(2)—affectionate epistles—elo-

(50) Longinus ranks Paul among the most famous orators.

(1) Madam Dacier, in the preface to her translation of Homer, assures us, that, “ the books of the Prophets and the Psalms, even in the Vulgate, are all full of such passages, as the greatest poet in the world could not put into verse, without losing much of their majesty and pathos.”

(2) “ Next to astronomy, few subjects expand the human mind more than the view which prophecy opens to us of the government of the Great King. To see the vast mass of materials, kingdoms, and centuries, in motion, only to the accomplishment of his purposes: to see refractory man employed to preserve the harmony of his designs; and the disorderly passions, while apparently working solely in their own narrow circle, ignorantly

quent orations—instructive historians—pure laws—rich promises—awful denunciations—useful examples,

advancing the fulfilment of his determinations! This is a study delightfully interesting, and which in common with the contemplation of all the Great Creator's doings, elevates the mind above the oppression of human cares and sorrows, and seems to leave her in that serenity of admiration, which one may imagine an imperfect foretaste of part of the employment and happiness of angels."

Cowley tells us, that "all the books of the Bible are either already most admirable and exalted pieces of poesy, or are the best materials in the world for it."

Blackmore says, that "for sense, and for noble and sublime thoughts, the poetical parts of Scripture have an infinite advantage above all others put together."

Prior is of opinion, that "the writings of Solomon afford subjects for finer poems in every kind than have yet appeared in the Greek, Latin, or any modern language."

Pope assures us, that "the pure and noble, the graceful and dignified simplicity of language is no where in such perfection as in the Scripture and Homer; and that the whole book of Job, with regard both to sublimity of thought and morality, exceeds beyond all comparison the most noble parts of Homer."

Rowe, after having read most of the Greek and Roman histories in their original languages, and most that are written in English, French, Italian, and Spanish, was fully persuaded of the truth of revealed religion, expressed it upon all occasions, took great delight in divinity and ecclesiastical history, and died at last like a christian and philosopher, with an absolute resignation to the will of God.

There are few anecdotes of our English poets which give more pleasure than that of Collins, who, in the latter part of his mortal career, "withdrew from study, and travelled with no other book than an English Testament, such as children carry to school." When a friend took it into his hand, out of curiosity to see what companion a man of letters had chosen—"I have one book only," said Collins, "but that is the best."

This knits my heart to Collins more than all the excellencies of his poetry. Sick and infirm, in the spirit of Mary, he sits at the divine Redeemer's feet, listening to the words of eternal life. In such a state of body and mind, one single promise, from his gracious and infallible lips, is of more real value and importance, than all the pompous learning of the most celebrated philosophers. This will never be properly felt and understood till we are in similar circumstances. When Dr. Watts was almost worn out, and

as are set before us in this richly fraught magazine of all true excellence in matter and composition, the Holy Bible?

Cedite, Romani Scriptores; cedite, Graii;

broken down by his infirmities, he observed in conversation with a friend, "he remembered an aged minister used to say, that the most learned and knowing Christians, when they come to die, have only the same plain promises of the gospel for their support, as the common and unlearned: and so I find it. It is the plain promises of the gospel that are my support; and I bless God, they are plain promises, that do not require much labour and pains to understand them, for I can do nothing now, but look into my Bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that."

This was the case with the pious and excellent Hervey. He wrote about two months before his death:—"I now spend almost my whole time, in reading and praying over the Bible.—"I am now reduced to a state of infant weakness, and given over by my physician.—My grand consolation is to meditate on Christ; and I am hourly repeating those heart-reviving lines of Young:

" This—only this subdues the fear of death;  
 And what is this?—Survey the wond'rous cure;  
 And at each step let higher wonder rise!  
 Pardon for infinite offence!—And pardon  
 Through means that speak its value infinite!—  
 A pardon bought with blood!—With blood divine!  
 With blood divine of him I made my foe!—  
 Persisted to provoke!—Though woo'd and aw'd,  
 Bless'd and chastis'd, a flagrant rebel still!—  
 A rebel 'midst the thunders of his throne!—  
 Nor I alone!—A rebel universe!—  
 My species up in arms!—Not one exempt!—  
 Yet for the foulest of the foul he dies!—  
 Most joy'd for the redem'd from deepest guilt!—  
 As if our race were held of highest rank;  
 And Godhead dearer, as more kind to man."

Mrs. Godwin, otherwise Mrs. Wollstonecroft, was a woman of considerable powers, but of a lewd character in life, living with Imlay; and when forsaken by him, living with, and being pregnant by Godwin, who afterwards married her. I mention this circumstance, because they were both professed philosophers, and unbelievers, and as a contrast to the above pious Christians. She attended no public worship, and during her last illness, no religious expressions escaped her philosophic lips.

And we recommend to the gentleman,(3) the scholar, and the philosopher, as well as to the illiterate Christian, the daily perusal of the Bible,

*Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.*

There is another circumstance; though there are several of your unbelieving brethren, who are men of considerable natural abilities, of some learning, and of decent morals, yet there are not a few among you, as among us, who are profane and debauched in no small degree; and who are not capable of being reasoned with upon any religious topic whatever. These are a disgrace to any cause. And the more zealously they avow their party, the less honourable it is to that party. Such men are little raised above the brutes that perish, being earthly, sensual, develish. Let them but eat, drink, sleep, and indulge the baser passions of the human frame, they ask no more, they look no higher.—To intellectual and refined enjoyments they are strangers. Of literary gratifications they know little. For moral and religious pleasures they have no taste. Immortal expectations, which exalt and ennable the mind of man, they are willing to forego. The language of their sensual souls, which are brutalized with indulgence, is no other than that of the ancient Epicureans:—“Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.” And did they die to-morrow, the public would have no great loss of them: could they make good their hopes, that death is an eternal cessation from sensibility, they themselves would sustain no material inconvenience. The best they can expect, is, to cease to be: a consummation, for such characters, devoutly to be wished!

(3) South observes, that “he who would not read the Scriptures for fear of spoiling his stile, shewed himself as much a blockhead as an atheist, and to have as small a gust of the elegancies of expression, as of the sacredness of the matter.”

These are the men, who make the greatest noise, and most violently oppose the religion of the Son of God and the Sacred Writings!(4)

It is an honour to that religion, and those writings, that such men are infidels, and avow their unbelief in the face of the world! May every unreasonable and immoral man do the same!

If every thing besides in this volume shall be despised, let the several examples herein recorded have their due weight upon your minds. If there be importance in any thing, it is usually to be found in the sentiments and behaviour of men, when they draw near the close of their earthly existence.

“ Men may live fools; but fools they cannot die.”

We may be hardened in our sins, when that event draws nigh. We may brave it out against death. We may set at defiance all the threats of heaven. But, usually, we discover certain symptoms of what our future destiny is like to be. Fear, horror, indifference, hope, trust, faith, reliance, joy, will all more or less prevail, according as the state of our minds shall be, in those solemn moments, when death is making his approach.(5) The time is not at any

(4) There are, upon an average, 200,000 manufacturers in this country who constantly spend their hours in idleness, drinking, gambling and debauchery. This large body of men may be considered as infidels in principle, atheists in practice, and ripe for any wicked and desperate enterprize which may arise. They are the curse of the country; and yet they are excessively wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own conceit. All the world are fools besides themselves. They are great politicians, great philosophers, great divines—over their cups!—and wisdom shall die with them!

(5) There is a very affecting narrative in the confession of a deist at the gates of death. The gentleman in question was a very respectable person of the medical profession in Maidenhead. He was a man of pleasure, as far as business would permit; but his favourite amusement was the card table, at which he spent much time, and would frequently say to Mr. Cooke, a dissenting minister, “ I am prodigiously fond of cards.” While he was visiting

great distance, when we too, must bear our final testimony; when the scene of this life shall close; and our eternal state commence. If so,

“ Nothing is worth a thought beneath,  
But how we may escape the death;  
That never, never dies !  
How make our own election sure,  
And, when we fail on earth, secure  
A mansion in the skies.”

one of his patients he was suddenly taken ill. His conscience was alarmed. His deistical principles, of which he had long made his boast while in health, gave way. He lamented his sad condition in most affecting and pitiable accents. Among other things he acknowledged, with unutterable distress, his neglect of the Lord's day, and the public worship of God. When he was well, he could say, “ he was easy without the Bible, he had no fears for his soul—he believed it would die with his body—and he was never disturbed about these things—he could read profane history with as much pleasure as another reads his Bible.” But when he was ill, and apprehended himself to be on the brink of the grave, he was thrown into such unutterable agony, as to be bereft of his reason. In the most bitter terms he bewailed his past folly—mourned over his lost opportunities—declared his full purpose, if restored, of attending to the great concerns of his soul—and solemnly warned his companions not to follow his example—and cried unto God for mercy. At length, after having lain for some time in a senseless state, he breathed out his soul with a dismal groan.

If Paine were as easy and confident in his deistical principles under the views of approaching dissolution as he pretends, this is by no means a sure criterion of those principles being the only true ones. No man's private persuasion, or conviction can be a sure test of truth. For we find men fully persuaded of the truth of their sentiments under the most various, and even contradictory opinions. The most, therefore, that can be inferred from a declaration of this nature, is, that Paine thought his opinions were according to truth, not that they really were so. Bolingbroke was an immoral man, and yet he too died a deist. Rousseau had been a wretch, and yet he died avowing his innocence even to the Almighty himself. Paine is by no means a moral character, and yet he rejects every idea of a Saviour. What then? Shall their self-righteous convictions be the standard of truth? If Paine had read and considered Sterne's Sermon on Conscience, he never would have produced his being easy in the views of apparent dissolution, as a proof that his deistical principles are founded in truth. Conscience may be lulled to rest by a vast multitude of soporifics. And there is such a thing too as having it seared as with an hot iron.”

If you are hardy enough to reject the scriptural representations of future misery, give credit to your own Bible, the writings of the most respectable of the Heathen. They had their elysium and tartarus, as we our heaven and hell. Nor was there ever any religious institution which held not out promises of reward to the obedient, and threatenings of punish-

One of the most remarkable instances of the power of conscience, is related by Fordyce in his Dialogues on Education.

If dying with ease, and a conviction that our own religious principles are the only true ones, were a certain proof of truth, and that we are right, then would the most absurd and contradictory opinions be proved to be true. How many Christians of the most opposite sentiments depart this life, under the firmest persuasion of the truth of their principles, and the most confident assurance that they are going to eternal rest? Would Paine allow this to be a just proof, that their opinions are founded in truth? Spinoza, the atheist, was a greater, and more moral man than Paine, and he died avowing his atheistic principles. Is this a proof that those principles are true? Shall we conclude there is no God, because a poor misguided man is mad enough to die in that persuasion? Because Bruno is such a fool as to burn at a stake in defence of the atheistic principles, shall the whole deistic scheme be thereby subverted, and atheism be considered as the only true doctrine? If this be true reasoning, what becomes of Paine's boasted principles?

How different are men's convictions under the afflicting hand of God? Paine continues hardened, and resolves to die in his infidelity. Bartholin, when affliction was heavy upon him, made a vow and promise to heaven, if he were restored to health, that he would give up his medical pursuits, and apply himself wholly to his religious concerns. He was restored, and kept the vow he had so solemnly made unto God. Paine is restored, and rages more than ever against the Lord and his Christ!

Priests, of every denomination, are objects of the highest possible contempt to our deistical gentlemen. One of that fraternity, who has since been taught the error of his ways, declared "He hoped to see the day when there would not be a priest—and that he would not believe the Christian religion while he had his senses."—Though then in a good state of health, within a couple of hours he was deranged, and soon after made various efforts to destroy himself, wishing to be in hell as soon as possible, that he might feel the worst of his case. Three physicians attended him for some time; and the rich promises of the gospel being held out to him, he was at length restored to a sound mind, and is now a happy witness of the power of redeeming grace.

ment to the disobedient. Indeed, every government, whether human or divine, must naturally and necessarily do it, or there is an end to all order. Every law must have its sanction. Accordingly, we find Homer, Plato, Virgil, and others, have said every thing that is horrible concerning the future misery of lost souls. Our great dramatists shall speak their opinions :

“ Ay, but to die, and go we know not where ;  
 To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot ;  
 This sensible warm motion to become  
 A kneaded clod ; and the delighted spirit  
 To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside  
 In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice ;  
 To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,  
 And blown with restless violence round about  
 The pendant world ; or to be worse than worst  
 Of those, that lawless and uncertain thoughts  
 Imagine howling : 'Tis too horrible !  
 The weariest and most loathed worldly life,  
 That age, ache, penury, imprisonment,  
 Can lay on nature is a paradise  
 To what we fear of death.”

If this be the future destiny of a certain class of our fellow creatures, we shall gain little by rejecting the gospel representations. We shall be extremely unwise to suffer our probationary period to pass away unimproved. If our race be indeed in a state of moral ruin ; if the Almighty hath devised means for our recovery ; if, among other messengers, he hath sent a person higher than the heavens to be our Redeemer(6) ; we shall be strangely wanting to ourselves, if

(6) For a very clear and satisfactory defence of the doctrine of redemption by Jesus Christ, and that he is the real and proper Son of God, see Porteus' Sermons. He who remains unconvinced after considering the various arguments advanced by him, will resist every thing that can be said by any other writer. If he is desirous of seeing the matter fairly argued between christianity and deism, let him have recourse to a volume of Sermons by Sherlock. I myself remember this book to have convinced a deter-

we treat this glorious person, and the doctrines of salvation he hath taught, with neglect or contempt. Therefore, let us examine the ground upon which we stand. Negligence, is as culpable as contempt. And on every system, a strictly moral and religious conduct is the duty, the interest, the felicity of all reasonable beings. What an idiot must that man be, who rejects his Saviour, his Bible, and all his immortal expectations, because of some chronological, or genealogical, or geographical difficulties in the records of his salvation, which he cannot reconcile to the full satisfaction of his mind? If the Bible were as full of blunders, contradictions and absurdities, as the Koran of Mohammed, yet might Jesus be a prophet sent from God. The reality of his mission does by no means depend upon the validity of the Scriptures,(7) though the Scriptures are as genuine and authentic as if all depended upon them.

Be wise, therefore, to know the time of your visitation. Make the most of your little span of life. Seek truth with modesty and humility, with patience and perseverance, and follow wheresoever it leads the way. Take the safe side. Believe in Christ. Examine every principle step by step. And should

mined deist, who is now an eminent instrument in the hands of Providence for the conversion of others. I would, therefore, to all such, use the words of Augustine—*Tolle et lege.*

(7) If we have any doubts concerning the truth of the gospel of Christ, it would be but fair to examine carefully all the other religions that now are, or that ever were, in the world, and compare them impartially—not with christianity as established in the several countries of Europe—but with the pure unmixed gospel, as taught by our Saviour, and left on record in the New-Testament, and then give the preference to that which is most excellent.

To the books in favour of christianity may be added Rogers's eight Sermons on the necessity of Divine Revelation; Conybeare's Defence of Revealed Religion; Gastrel's Certainty and Necessity of Religion, and his Certainty of the Christian Revelation.

the evidence for infidelity fall ever so little short of demonstration, if you act a reasonable part, you will believe in Jesus, because infinite danger presses on that side, and no danger whatever on the side of faith and obedience. Submit, then, to his easy and delightful yoke. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are paths of peace. In the opinion of all wise and good men of every age and nation :

" 'Tis religion that must give  
Sweetest pleasures while we live ;  
'Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die ;  
After death its joys shall be  
Lasting as eternity." (8)

(8) Though infidelity is making its way rapidly among the nations, and among all orders of men, yet is the cause of the gospel by no means desperate ; though every possible effort is making to establish its reign, there are equal efforts at least making by good men of all denominations, for the propagation of evangelical truth. Let every man that is on the Lord's side come forward, and avow himself a friend of the despised Nazarene, in opposition to all the powers of earth and hell. Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. When we consider the present situation of the great bulk of mankind, whose heart does not burn within him to contribute something towards evangelizing the nations ? The inhabitants of the world are said to amount at this time to about 731 millions ; of whom 420 millions are Pagans ; 130 millions Mohammedans ; 100 millions Catholics ; 44 millions Protestants ; 30 millions of the Greek and Armenian churches ; and 7 millions Jews.

Mr. Carey, a missionary among the Hindoos, says	
Europe contains	- 166,932,000
Asia	- 387,884,500
Africa	- 61,137,200
America	- 116,621,420
<hr/>	
The World	- 732,575,120
<hr/>	
Guthrie makes the world to contain	- 953,000,000
<hr/>	
The medium number may be	- 800,000,000

If, however, after your most serious and conscientious endeavours, you are not able to find satisfactory evidence, that Christ came from God; you must al-

Christians	-	-	-	-	170,000,000
Jews	-	-	-	-	9,000,000
Mohammedans	-	-	-	-	140,000,000
Pagans	-	-	-	-	481,000,000

Total 800,000,000

Subdivisions among Christians may be thus:

Protestants	-	-	-	50,000,000
Greeks and Armenians	-	-	-	30,000,000
Catholics, &c.	-	-	-	90,000,000

Total 170,000,000

Is not this view of things a loud call to the friends of the gospel to use every possible means to promote the spread of it among the nations?—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed," is the language of inspiration. Are we in no danger then from that spirit of slumber which overspreads our minds? Ought not every man, who has any concern for his own future happiness, to lend an helping hand to promote the salvation of the many millions of souls, who now sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death? The Moravians have herein the greatest merit. That small sect has done more to spread the honour of the Redeemer's name among barbarous nations, than all the Protestants in Christendom. These worthy people began their missions in the year 1732, and have now, in different parts of the world, and those several of them the most unpropitious, no less than 26 settlements. In these settlements near 140 missionaries are employed in superintending about 23,000 converts from the heathens!

The king of Denmark sent out two persons in the year 1705 to Tranquebar on the coast of Coromandel, which mission has been continued to the present time with considerable advantage to the cause of Christ, in that part of the world.

The Society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, and that for promoting Christian knowledge in the highlands and islands of Scotland, were both begun about the year 1701, and have both been extremely useful in spreading the knowledge of the Redeemer's name.

The Society for promoting Christian knowledge was begun in the year 1698, and has been carried forward with considerable spirit for near one whole century. At present they have six missionaries in the East Indies, and one in the islands of Scilly.

low at least, with Rousseau, that he was an extraordinary man; one of the first characters that ever ap-

From these missionaries some very pleasing accounts have been published in the several annual reports. The efforts of this honourable society have been very considerable also in the distribution of Bibles and other religious books of various descriptions. The Bibles sent out the last three years averaged 5,228 each year, the New Testaments and Psalters 9,333, Common Prayers 9,738, other bound books 10,562, and small tracts 69,754. A charity of a most extensive, valuable, and important nature! But, a principal object with this society, is the education of poor children.

The Baptists have lately sent out two persons to the East-Indies, but the fruit of their labours does not yet appear to be considerable. The mission is in its infancy.\*

The Europeans in that country are very generally in a state of infidelity. This confirms what has been said by the natives in broken English; Christian religion—Devil religion! Christian much drunk—Christian much do wrong, much beat, much abuse others.—The natives are apt to say in making their bargains—“What, dost thou think me a Christian, that I would go about to deceive thee?” “It is a sad sight,” says one of the first missionaries, “to behold a drunken Christian, and a sober Indian; a temperate Indian, and a Christian given up to his appetite; an Indian that is just and square in his dealing, a Christian not so. O what a sad thing it is for Christians, to come short of Indians, even in moralities! to come short of those, who themselves believe, to come short of heaven!”

Considerable effects also may be expected to arise from the two settlements on the coast of Africa and New Holland; if we compare America two or three centuries ago, with what it is at the present period.

The Methodist connexion has been considerably successful in winning souls to Christ in the West Indies. In the year 1794, they had upwards of a dozen preachers employed in the different islands, and near 8,000 blacks in society, besides others of different descriptions.

The Missionary Society in London have taken up the deplorable situation of the Heathen nations with great spirit; and present prospects are very promising. How far it may please the great Head of the church to succeed their endeavours in behalf of the heathen, remains yet to be proved. Be this as it may, the

\* There are now, 1808, sixteen Baptist missionaries in Bengal. They have made a number of converts, some of whom are preachers. Large numbers attend upon their sermons. The Bible has been translated into the Bengalee language.—*Phil. editor.*

peared upon earth.(9) See then that you blaspheme not his name; treat his cause and interest in the world with respect; walk according to the best light you have; be virtuous in your own way, and do all you can—not to make converts to infidelity—because when men commence infidels, they usually become immoral, but to lead your fellow-men into the paths of piety and virtue, under some denomination or other. If, indeed, you can fairly, by sound argument, and solid evidence, explode the divine authority of the gospel, we are so far from being afraid of

persons concerned shall not lose their reward. The attempt is honourable. Every believer in Christ Jesus should throw his mite into one or other of these treasures of heaven. More noble still, however, is he, who laying aside all party prejudices, and narrow plans of human policy, contributes according to his ability, to every scheme set on foot for the salvation of his fellow-creatures, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. I can not conceive how any man, who professes to believe in the name of Christ, can be at rest in his spirit, without making some effort to advance the honour of his name. It is a black mark upon him. *Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion—that put far away the evil day—that lie upon beds of ivory, that stretch themselves upon their couches, that eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the stall—that chant to the sound of the viol—that drink wine in bowls—but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.*

Thanks be to God, that though a spirit of infidelity is rapidly spreading itself through the old rotten churches of Europe, yet there is a fire kindled in the hearts of thousands that shall never be extinguished, till all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. A missionary spirit is beginning to shew itself, all through England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, and America, which shall finally diffuse itself through every nation under heaven.

Why do not our unbelieving countrymen form societies, and send out missionaries to convert the nations to pure deism? If they are in earnest, and if they consider their principles as the only true and important ones, they certainly ought so to do, or else they fall under divine condemnation.

(9) Most of the modern dabblers in science, allow that Jesus Christ was one of the greatest geniuses, and most extraordinary men that ever appeared upon earth. Others deny his very existence!

consequences, that we call upon you to do it.(60) Try then what you can do. Exert all your talents. Call forth every latent power of the mind. Bring out your stores of ancient and modern lore. But no ridicu-

(60) Atheists and unbelievers have more or less abounded in every age of the world. In Noah's time the whole human race was gone astray. In the days of David, the fool said in his heart, There is no God. Scoffers appeared in the age of the apostles, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? I remember reading of a man in the last century, who was a great enthusiast against the Bible. Either to display his wit, or his fanaticism, he proceeded in the following truly curious manner;

In the year 1649, as Mr. Fawcett was preaching in his church, at Walton upon Thames, towards the close of the afternoon, six soldiers entered the church. One of them had a lantern in one hand, with a candle burning in it: in the other hand were four candles not lighted. When Mr. Fawcett had gone through the service of the day, and dismissed the congregation, this man called to the people to stay a little, for he had a message to them from God. Not being permitted to ascend the pulpit, or to address the people any farther in the church, he went into the yard, where the congregation collected around him. He told them that he had had a vision, and had received a command from God to deliver his will unto them; and which they must receive upon pain of damnation. "It consisted," he said, "of five lights.—That the sabbath was abolished, as unnecessary and ceremonial.—And here," said the man, "I should have put out my first light; but the wind is so high I cannot kindle it.—Tythes are abolished, as Jewish, and a great burden to the saints of God, and a discouragement of industry and tillage.—And here I should have put out my second light, &c.—Ministers are abolished, as antichristian, and of no farther use, now that Christ himself descends into the hearts of his saints, and his Spirit enlivens them with revelations and inspirations. And here I should have put out my third light, &c.—Magistrates are abolished, as useless, now that Christ himself is in purity of spirit come among us, and has erected the kingdom of the saints upon earth. Besides, they are tyrants and oppressors of the liberty of the saints, and tie them to laws and ordinances, mere human inventions. And here I should have put out my fourth light, &c.—Then, putting his hand in his pocket, and pulling out a little Bible, he shewed it open to the people, saying, "Here is a book you have all in great veneration, consisting of two parts, the Old and New Testament. I must tell you, it is abolished. It contains beggarly rudiments, milk for babes: but now Christ is in glory amongst us, and imparts a fuller

cule ! no laughter ! no sneers ! The occasion is too great and serious. Come forward in all the dignity of good sense, in all the majesty of conscious integrity, in all the zeal which the love of truth inspires, furnished with languages, knowledge, experience, observation, and either honourably overthrow the cause of the gospel, which we assuredly deem the cause of truth ; or, like Jenyns and Pringle, openly acknowledge that you are convinced and conquered. This would be manly. This would be acting in a manner worthy the character of lovers of truth. And on such men the God of truth himself would look down from heaven well pleased.

I have already called your attention to a variety of characters from among the moderns, some good, others bad, some believers, others unbelievers. I would wish you to take the Bible into your own hands, and read it carefully and coolly over, as a book of common history only, without any regard to its divine original ; and then endeavour to form an impartial judgment what course you ought to take, and what the event of your present conduct will be. To bring the matter to a short and easy issue, turn to the thirty-seventh psalm, read it seriously over half a dozen times, and consider its contents. Do not be rash, foolish, head-strong, and reject this, and the other sacred records, without either rhyme or reason ; but be cool, deliberate, sober, well-advised, and determine to choose the side of prudence, discretion, and safety. Let the several historical characters record-

measure of his spirit to his saints than this can afford ; and therefore I am commanded to burn it before your faces." So taking the candle out of the lantern, he set fire to the leaves ; and then, putting out the candle, he cried—" And here my fifth light is extinguished."

This is not the only madman whom we have known to burn his Bible.—One, to be more witty than his sagacious brethren, roasted his Bible before a slow fire !

ed in the Old and New Testament, be taken into your most careful consideration, and judge calmly of their comparative respectability, and with whom you should like best to die. Whether had you rather wish to die and have your portion in eternity with Cain, Balaam, and Pharaoh; with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; with Saul, Absalom, and Ahitophel; with Herod, Judas, Pilate, and such characters; or would you choose to die and have your portion in eternity with Abel, Noah, and Lot; with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph; with Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Samuel; with David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah; with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; with John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the twelve apostles, the seventy disciples, and all the other excellent men, whose names are recorded with approbation in the Jewish and Christian code? Can you hesitate one moment which side you would wish to take?

But, if you do already see reason to believe in the Son of God; or if at any future period you should find cause so to do, take heed that you imbibe the true, noble, liberal, and benevolent spirit of the gospel, in all its purity and extent.

Be not ashamed either of its doctrines or precepts. Its doctrines are oracles, its precepts are sanctioned with penalties of a nature the most tremendous that can be conceived. Hold fast the former, regardless of the obloquy of self-righteous moralists, in all their purity and extent. They form one grand, well compacted system, far more glorious than the whole universe of visible created things. The heavens declare the glory of God, the wonderful variety of creatures upon earth his wisdom, power, and goodness; but the scheme of saving a lost world, by the interposition of his Son, outshines all the other works of the Divine Being that have ever come within the ken of mortal creatures. "God, who at sundry times, and

in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."—This is perfectly in the spirit of ancient prophecy:—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God; the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.—Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth even for ever."—The beloved disciple of our Lord displays the original grandeur of this Mighty One more fully than the prophet:—"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.—And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."—This amazing idea of the creating power of the Redeemer is still more expanded by the apostle of the Gentiles:—"By him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.—He being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; and though he was God's fellow, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion

as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ; of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—So that, though all(1) "have sinned and come short of the glory

(1) It may be safely asserted that all truly serious and religiously minded people are nearly of one opinion concerning the great doctrines of the gospel. They live in the comfort and die in the faith of them. The Calvinist and Arminian here are of one mind. When Wesley came to die, his language was,

" I the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me."

" There is no way into the holiest, but by the blood of Jesus."  
" I'll praise my Maker with my breath," &c.

Toplady also was supported with divine consolations during his last sickness. A few days before his death he said to a friend, " It is impossible to describe how good God is to me. This afternoon I have enjoyed such a season, such sweet communion with God, and such delightful manifestations of his presence with, and love to my soul, that it is impossible for words, or any language to express them. I have had peace and joy unutterable. The comforts and manifestations of God's love are so abundant, as to render my state and condition the most desirable in the world. I would not exchange my condition with any one upon earth."

The same friend calling upon him a day or two before his death, he said, with hands clasped, and his eyes lifted up and starting with tears of the most evident joy ; " I cannot tell you the comforts I feel in my soul. They are past expression. The consolations of God to such an unworthy wretch are so abundant, that he leaves me nothing to pray for, but a continuance of them, I enjoy a heaven already in my soul. My prayers are all converted into praise.—

" Oh how this soul of mine longs to be gone ! Like a bird imprisoned in a cage, it longs to take its flight. O that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away to the realms of bliss, and be at rest for ever ! O that some guardian angel might be commissioned ; for I long to be absent from this body, and to be with my Lord for ever.—

of God, we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God

“ O what a day of sun-shine has this been to me! I have not words to express it. It is unutterable. O, my friends, how good is God! Almost without interruption his presence has been with me.—

“ O what delights! Who can fathom the joys of the third heaven? The sky is clear; there is no cloud; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

Musculus's Soliloquy before death, is in the highest spirit of the gospel of Christ.

“ Nil superest vitæ; frigus præcordia captat:  
Sed tu, Christe, mihi vita perennis ades.  
Quid trepidas, Anima? Ad sedes abitura quietis;  
En tibi ductor adest Angelus ille tuus.  
Linque domum hanc miseram, nunc in sua fata ruentem,  
Quam tibi fida Dei dextera restituet.  
Peccasti?—Scio: Sed Christus credentibus in se  
Peccata expurgat sanguine cuncta suo.  
Horribilis mors est? Fateor: Sed proxima vita est,  
Ad quam te Christi gratia certa vocat.  
Præsto est de Satana; peccato, in morte triumphans  
Christus: Ad Hunc igitur læta alacrisque migra.”

Zuinger, when he lay upon his death-bed, took his leave of the world in the following fine copy of verses, which is a liberal paraphrase of the 122 psalm.

“ O lux candida, lux mihi  
Læti conscia transitus!  
Per Christi meritum patet  
Vitæ porta beatæ.  
Me status revocat dies  
Augustam Domini ad domum:  
Jam sacra ætherii premant  
Lætus limina templi.  
Jam visam Solymæ edita  
Coelo culmina, et ædium  
Coetus angelicos, suo et  
Augustam populo urbem:  
Urbem, quam procul infimis  
Terra finibus exciti  
Petunt Christiadæ, ut Deum  
Laudent voce perenni:  
Jussam Cælius oppidis  
Urbem jus dare ceteris,  
Et sedem fore Davidis  
Cuncta in sæcla beati.

hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus: Christ being the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."—These things being laid together, and duly considered, may we not exclaim with the same devout and admiring apostle? "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Such are the doctrines of Christ, of which the apostle declares he was not ashamed, and of which no Christian ought or need to be ashamed, because they are "the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth" in his name. And we may say of them what Paul says upon another occasion? "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel

Mater nobilis urbium!  
 Semper te bona pax amat:  
 Et te semper amantibus  
 Cedunt omnia recte.  
 Semper pax tua mœnia  
 Colit; semper in atriis  
 Tuis copia dextera  
 Larga munera fundit.  
 Dulcis Christiadum domus,  
 Civem adscribe novitium;  
 Sola comitate Caritas  
 Spesque, Fidesque, valete."

How different is the spirit of these dying scenes from those of our modern philosophers, who usually depart like unto Adrian, or in a manner much inferior:

"Animula vagula, blandula  
 Hospes, comesque corporis,  
 Qua nunc abibis in loca  
 Palidula, rigida, nudula,  
 Nec, ut soles, dabis jocos?"

unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Harsh as these words may seem, they were written in all the plenitude of apostolical authority, and apply to every case where the essential doctrines of the Sacred Writings are concerned.—What those doctrines are, it may not be expedient to say; the Scriptures are in every one's hands, and no man need continue in ignorance of what the Lord God requires of him.

And then, as to the precepts of the Redeemer's religion, they are such as have been admired in all ages, and such as no man need feel himself ashamed to own. The substance of them is: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:" A precept so held in admiration by one of the Roman emperors, that he had it inscribed in various public places to be seen and read of all men. This excellent laconic sentence is more expanded by our Lord himself in another place: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. And thy neighbour as thyself." And still more by Paul: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." May I not then exhort you in the words of the same apostle, "To present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service? and not to be conformed to this world; but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye

may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God:—" Endeavour to be uniformly and conscientiously, inwardly and outwardly, religious. Lay aside all other thoughts and concerns, and let the pardon of your sins, the justification of your persons, the purification of your natures, and the salvation of your souls, be the grand business and aim of your life. Every thing within you, and every thing without you, will oppose this great regenerating process of religion. Remember, however, this is your main concern in the world. One thing alone is truly needful. Secure this, and every thing beside is safe.

" This done, the poorest can no wants endure ;  
And this not done the richest must be poor."

" Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.—Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all necessary things shall be added unto you." If you are ever so rich, great, wise, learned, honourable ; if you are not at the same time substantially and experimentally religious, you are a miserable man. Do you want proof of this? Look inward, and look forward to the close of life ; or turn back, and impartially consider the experience of the several persons, whose declarations we have recorded. Compare them, weigh them, discriminate their characters ; reject what is base and unworthy your attention, take alarm at the warnings of the dying penitents, and resolve, by the grace of God, to have a name and place among his people. Let others despise and neglect the Sacred Writings, as the humour shall lead, do you be much in the perusal of them. Let them dwell in you richly. They will make you happy in your own soul, and wise unto salvation. Search them, dig in them, scrutinize them, let your daily delight be in them. It is the engrafted word, and the word of God's grace alone, which is able to build us up in faith and love,

and save our souls alive. Read it as the word of God. Read it with religious views. Read it with constant prayer to heaven for divine illumination; and, as often as convenient, get upon your knees in secret<sup>(2)</sup> with the Bible spread before you, and, be assured, you shall experience such sublime and ravishing delights, as the most happy and prosperous worldly men are utter strangers to, and as you yourselves can have no proper conception of, till you have made the experiment. Could I be the happy instrument of inducing you to make the experiment, you would bless me for ever. And if you could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and possessed all knowledge human and divine; if you could perform wonders like Moses, celebrate the praises of God like David, prophecy like Isaiah, write like Paul, preach like Peter, thunder like James and John, and offer up your souls on racks and in flames, like the Maccabean mother and her seven noble sons; if you had power with God like Jacob, and had the valour of Joshua, the strength of Sampson, the beauty of Absalom, the wisdom of Solomon, the zeal of Phineas, with every other qualification natural and acquired, that ever centered in any of the sons of men; yet, without a close, intimate, experimental acquaintance with the sacred oracles, and the great truths therein contained, all will avail nothing; you can neither enjoy true consolation in your spirit now, nor be capable of felicity hereafter when you die. Were I, therefore, permitted to give my last dying advice, to the dearest friend<sup>(3)</sup> whom

(2) Renty, a French nobleman, used to read three chapters a day, with his head uncovered, and on his bended knees: and this is the practice likewise of abundance of religious characters in the present day.

(3) Sidney, taking leave of his brother Robert, when he died of the wound which he had received in the field of battle, said, "Love my memory; cherish my friends;—but above all, govern your will and affections by the will and word of your Creator; in me beholding the end of this world, with all her vanities."

I have in the world, it would be the same which Johnson gave to his friend Joshua Reynolds—"Read your Bible:"(4)—I only should add as above—Read it daily upon your knees with fervent prayer for di-

Christopher Hatton, a little before his death, advised his relations to be serious in searching after the will of God in his holy word: "for it is deservedly accounted a piece of excellent knowledge to understand the laws of the land, and the customs of a man's country; how much more to know the statutes of heaven and the laws of eternity, those immutable and eternal laws of justice and righteousness! To know the will and pleasure of the great Monarch, and universal King! I have seen an end of all perfection, but the commandments of God are exceeding broad."

(4) Johnson himself read the Bible too little, and other books too much. This, and associating frequently with men of little or no religion, were the main causes of his great leanness of soul, and fear of death all through life.

The more religious people read the Sacred Writings, and the less, in general, they trouble themselves with the compositions of men, the better. If, however, the reader wish to know what books are best calculated to advance the spirit of religion in the soul the following have been found singularly useful: Scougal's life of God in the Soul of Man—Baxter's Saint's everlasting Rest, Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul—Watts on the Love of God—Rowe's Devout Exercises of the Heart—Young's Night Thoughts—Milton's Paradise Lost and Regained—Law's Serious Call to a devout and holy Life—and Thomas a Kempis on the Imitation of Jesus Christ.—Kempis, in particular was a great favourite with Leighton and Burnet. Law's Serious Call has the honour of being the means of the conversion of Johnson; which book he used therefore much to commend, saying. "It was the finest piece of hortatory theology in any language."—This book has extorted the following eulogium even from the sceptical Gibbon:

"Law's master-work, the Serious Call, is still read as a popular and powerful book of devotion. His precepts are rigid, but they are founded on the gospel, his satire is sharp, but it is drawn from the knowledge of human life; and many of his portraits are not unworthy of the pen of La Bruyere. If he finds a spark of piety in his reader's mind, he will soon kindle it to a flame; and a philosopher must allow, that he exposes, with equal severity and truth, the strange contradiction between the faith and practice of the Christian world. Under the names of Flavia and Miranda he has admirably described my two aunts—

vine illumination; and rest not, till you have imbibed the spirit of it into the very frame and constitution of your soul, and transcribed the precepts and example of Jesus into every part of your daily deportment in life.

This should be the last dying advice, which I would give to the tenderest friend I have upon earth. And if I should have no other opportunity permitted me, I here leave it on record, in direct opposition to the obloquy of the irreligious, and unbelieving world, as a legacy to my friends and the people among whom I have preached the gospel, of more real and intrinsic value than thousands of gold and silver:—*Read your Bibles, and read till you love to read. Pray daily over them, and pray till you love to pray.* When the Scriptures and prayer become delightful, and the time spent therein seem soon expired, then may you humbly suppose you have made some proficiency in the divine life. But, if you can spend whole days together, without refreshing your soul with some portion of the Holy Writings; if you feel

the Heathen and the Christian sister.” This is not common praise!

To the above books should be added Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress; Taylor’s Holy Living and Dying; Leighton’s Works; and such other writings as are of a lively and evangelical nature.—I remember hearing Conyers say, that if he were banished into a desert island, and permitted to take with him only four books, the Life of Halyburton should be one of the four.

This useful life is also the book which Ellys valued above all the books in his learned and copious library.

With respect to the leading and most important doctrines of the gospel, I do not know that they are any where more plainly and faithfully expounded than in the book of homilies. I have been of this opinion many years, making allowance for the language, and certain circumstances peculiar to the times in which they were written. In this opinion I find myself confirmed by Horsley, who says, “These discourses I would earnestly recommend to your frequent study, as an unexceptionable summary of doctrine upon these important points, and an excellent model of composition for popular instruction.”

yourselves cold, remiss, and negligent in private prayer; or if, when you read the Scriptures, and retire for devotion, you have little or no taste for the heavenly employ, but it appears irksome and disagreeable, and the time spent therein tedious and wearisome, you may be assured, let your professions be what they may, and the sermons you hear ever so numerous, or ever so excellent, your soul is either wholly dead to things divine, or you are in a back-sliding and dangerous condition.

If you have never been accustomed to this religious exercise, it is extremely probable you will, for a time, find much reluctance to it, a grievous struggle under it, and great unprofitableness in it. Be not, however, discouraged; but proceed in the divine employ till you have conquered every difficulty. And remember, these are difficulties that are common to man; that have been vanquished by multitudes in every age of the church: and that must be overcome by you. Your present comfort, as well as your everlasting welfare depend upon the victory. For your encouragement, call to mind the saying of Pythagoras, the ancient philosopher;

“ Let the best course of life your choice invite,  
For custom soon will turn it to delight:”

And the similar sentiment of Hesiod, the old poet: “ The gods have placed labour before virtue; the way to her is at first rough and difficult, but grows more smooth and easy the further you advance in it.” Infinitely more encouraging and authoritative still is the language of the apostle; “ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Various instances might be produced of persons who when they approached the close of life, bitterly lamented their neglect of the sacred volume. And

numerous are the examples of persons in all ages, who have spent much of their time in perusing that most unparalleled book. Moses, Isaiah, and Malachi enjoin it upon all the Jews, both young and old. God himself commands the duty to Joshua. It was the constant practice of David through life. And there is reason to suppose that Jesus Christ spent most of his leisure in this manner. Our great epic bard hath represented him as saying :

“ When I was yet a child, no childish play  
To me was pleasing ; all my mind was set  
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do  
What might be public good ; myself I thought  
Born to that end, born to promote all truth,  
All righteous things : therefore above my years  
The law of God I read, and found it sweet,  
Made it my whole delight, and in it grew  
To such perfection, that ere my age  
Had measur'd twice six years, at our great feast  
I went into the temple, there to hear  
The teachers of our law, and to propose  
What might improve their knowledge or my own ;  
And was admir'd by all.”

Both Christ and his disciple Paul recommend the employ to every Christian. Timothy was trained from his childhood in this way. And the Bereans are spoken of as being more noble than others, because they searched the Scriptures daily. The primitive Christians were intimately acquainted with the Sacred Writings, and generally carried a Bible about them, making it their companion wherever they went. And such was their affection for it, that many of them have been found buried with the gospel laying on their breasts. Women wore it hanging at their necks. Children were trained up from their infancy to repeat it by heart ; some of whom made surprising proficiency.

"Instead of gems and silk," says(5) Jerome to Lœta, "let your young daughter be enamoured with the holy Scriptures; wherein not gold, nor skins, nor Babylonian embroideries, but a correct and beautiful variety, producing faith, will recommend itself. Let her first learn the Psalter, and be entertained with those songs, then be instructed in life by the proverbs of Solomon. Let her learn from Ecclesiastes to despise worldly things; transcribe from Job the practice of patience and virtue. Let her pass then to the gospels, and never let them be out of her hands; and then imbibe with all the faculties of her mind the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles. When she has enriched the store-house of her breast with these treasures, let her learn the prophets, the Heptateuch, or books of Moses, Joshua and Judges, the book of Kings, and Chronicles, the volumes of Ezra and Esther, and, lastly, the Canticles.—The book of Revelation has as many mysteries as words; I said too little; in every word there is a variety of senses, and the excellency of the book is above all praise."

The monks of Egypt daily learned some portion of Scripture, and more especially made it their medita-

(5) Pope, in comparing the discovery of Ulysses to Telemachus, with Joseph's discovery of himself to his brethren, says, "It must be owned that Homer falls infinitely short of Moses: he must be a very wicked man that can read the history of Joseph without the utmost touches of compassion and transport. There is a majestic simplicity in the whole relation, and such an affecting portrait of human nature, that it overwhelms us with vicissitudes of joy and sorrow. This is a pregnant instance how much the best of heathen writers are inferior to the divine historian upon a parallel subject, where the two authors endeavour to move the softer passions. The same may with equal truth be said in respect to sublimity; not only in the instance produced by Longinus, viz. Let there be light, and there was light; let the earth be made, and the earth was made; but in general, in the more elevated parts of Scripture, and particularly in the whole book of Job, which, with regard both to sublimity of thought, and morality, exceeds beyond all comparison the most noble parts of Homer."

tion on the Lord's day ; insomuch that many of them became so expert and well versed in the holy Scripture, that they could repeat it by heart : which is particularly noticed of Hilarion, Ammonius, Marcus Junior, Eros, Serapion, Solomon, and others. And by this means they were qualified to entertain their souls with spiritual exercises, singing David's Psalms, and repeating other parts of Scripture, even at their bodily labours.—At Christ's little village of Bethlehem there was nothing to be heard but psalms: one could not go into the field, but he would hear the plowman singing his hallelujahs, the sweating mower solacing himself with hymns, and the vine-dresser tuning David's psalms. Thus the ancient monks joined their bodily and spiritual exercise together, and made their common labour become acts of devotion to God.—Their times of eating and refreshment were managed after the same manner. In some places they had the Scriptures read at table. At other places, when supper was ended they sung an hymn, and so returned to their cells.—Thus their ordinary refreshments were sanctified with the word of God and prayer.—It is very observable, that in the primitive church not only men and women, but children were encouraged and trained up from their infancy to the reading of the holy Scriptures. Of this we have undoubted evidence from many eminent instances of their practice. Eusebius remarks the great care of Leonides, the martyr, and father of Origen, in the education of his son, that he made him learn the Scriptures before he set him to the study of the liberal arts and polite learning. And Socrates makes the like observation upon the education of Eusebius, who was born of noble parentage at Edessa, a city of Osrœne in Mesopotamia, that he was first taught the holy Scriptures from his infancy, and then human learning. And Sozomen, in relating the same story, says, this was done according to the custom of the country ;

which shews, that it was no singular instance, but a general practice to bring children up from their infancy to the use of the holy Scriptures. Gregory Nyssene, notes it in the life of his sister Macrina, that the first part of her instruction in her infancy, was to be taught the easy portions of Scripture, that were most suitable to her age; and he says also, she did the same for her younger brother Peter, taking him from his mother's breasts, and instructing him in the Scriptures, that he might have no time to spend upon vain studies. Tis noted by Sozomen and Palladius of Marcus, that he was so expert in the Scriptures when he was but a youth, that he could repeat all the Old and New Testament without book. Such was the advantage which some hearers in those days reaped from the benefit of having the Scriptures read, that it is very remarkable what is related of one or two of them; that being men of good memories, they got the Scriptures by heart, without any knowledge of letters, only by hearing them constantly read in the church or elsewhere. Austin remarks this of Anthony, that without being able to read himself, he made such a proficiency in the knowledge of the Scriptures, as both by hearing them read, to be able to repeat them, and by his own prudent meditation to understand them. And Gregory gives a like instance in one Servulus, a poor man at Rome, who though he knew not a letter in the book, yet purchasing a Bible, and entertaining religious men, he prevailed with them to read it continually to him, by which means he perfectly learned the holy Scriptures. Tis yet a more astonishing instance, which Eusebius gives in one of the martyrs of Palestine, a blind man, called John, who had so happy a memory, that he could repeat any part of the Bible as readily as others could read it; and he sometimes supplied the office of reader in the church; and he did this to so great perfection, that Eusebius says, when he first heard him, he was

perfectly amazed, and thought he had heard one reading out of a book, till he came a little more curiously to examine him, and found that he did it only by the eyes of his understanding, having the Scriptures written, not in books or tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart. There are many such like instances in ancient history.

At the time of the reformation also, after the Bible had been buried under the rubbish of human ordinances for many ages, the people in this country were extremely eager to read and hear the holy Scriptures. They were received with inexpressible joy. Ridley and others could repeat large parts of them without book. Barnes sometime afterwards, read a small pocket Bible, that he usually carried about him, a hundred and twenty times over, at leisure hours. Beza, at upwards of eighty years of age, could repeat the whole of Paul's Epistles, in the original Greek, and all the Psalms in Hebrew.

Cromwell, in a journey to and from Rome, learned the whole of the New Testament by heart.—Lady Jane Gray, though executed at the age of sixteen, the night before she died, bequeathed to her sister a Greek Testament, on one of the blank leaves of which she wrote:—"I have sent you a book, which, although it be not outwardly trimmed with gold, yet inwardly it is of more worth than all the precious mines, which the vast world can boast of. It is the book of the law of the Lord. It is the testament and last will which he bequeathed unto us wretched sinners, which shall lead you to the path of eternal joy.—It will teach you to live, and learn you to die.—If you apply yourself diligently to this book, seeking to direct your life according to the rule of the same, it shall win you more, and endow you with greater felicity, than the possession of all your father's lands, and you shall be an inheritor of such riches, as neither the

covetous shall withdraw from you, neither the thief shall steal, neither yet the moths corrupt."

Elizabeth, speaking of her own conduct, saith, " I walk many times in the pleasant fields of the holy Scriptures, where I pluck up the goodlisome herbs of sentences by pruning; and lay them up at length in the high seat of memory by gathering them together : that so, having tasted the sweetness, I may the less perceive the bitterness of this miserable life."

Alphonsus, king of Naples, who did not begin to study till he was fifty years of age, read over the Old and New Testament, with their glosses, fourteen times.

Grotius made the holy Scriptures his favourite study in every period of his life. They were his consolation in prison ; he always devoted a part of the day to them : and they were his principal study during a great part of his embassy abroad.

Father Paul had read over the Greek Testament with so much exactness, that having used to mark every word, when he had fully weighed the importance of it: as he went through it; he had, by going often over it, and observing what he had passed by in a former reading, grown up to that at last, that every word was marked in the whole New Testament; and when any new illustrations of passages were suggested to him, he received them with transports of joy.

Wotton, after his customary public devotion, used to retire to his study, and there to spend some hours in reading the Bible, and authors in divinity, closing up his meditations with private prayer.

Hartopp, amidst his other applications, made the book of God his chief study, and divinest delight. The Bible lay before him night and day.

Bonnell made the holy Scriptures his constant and daily study. He read them, he meditated upon them, he prayed over them.

Witsius was able to recite almost any passage of Scripture in its proper language, together with its context, and the criticisms of the best commentators.

Gouge tied himself to read fifteen chapters in the Bible daily.

Lady Frances Hobart read the Psalms over twelve times every year, the New Testament thrice, and the other parts of the Old Testament once.

Susannah, Countess of Suffolk, for the last seven years of her life, read the whole Bible over twice annually.(6)—And that the knowledge of the holy Scripture was never intended to be confined to clergy, or to kings, learned men, and persons of rank, is evident from the words of Erasmus, who contributed more perhaps than any other man, towards promoting the knowledge of the scriptural learning.—“ I would desire that all women should read the gospel, and the

(6) There have been many female characters highly eminent for their piety and knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures. Queen Catharine Parr—Queen Mary—Lady C. Courten—Lady M. Houghton—Lady Cutts—Lady E. Hastings—Lady M. Armyne—Lady A. Halket—Lady Langham—Lady E. Brooke—Lady M. Vere, Mrs. C. Phillips—Mrs. J. Ratcliffe—Mrs. C. Bretterg—Mrs. A. Baynard—Mrs. A. M. Schurman—Mrs. E. Bury—Mrs. E. Burnet, Mrs. E. Rowe, and others.

In the reign of Henry V. a law was passed against the perusal of the Scriptures in English. It enacted, “ that whatsoever they were that should read the Scriptures in the mother tongue, they should forfeit land, catel, lif, and godes from theyr heyres for ever, and so be condempned for heretykes to God, enemies to the crowne, and most errant traitors to the lande.”

The above is an honourable list of female characters. We may therefore place them in the higher class of Aylmer's account of the fair sex; for this good bishop, when preaching at court before Elizabeth, tells his audience, that “ women are of two sorts, some of them are wiser, better learned, discreeter, and more constant, than a number of men: but another and worse sort of them, and the most part, are fond, foolish, wanton fibbergibs, tatlers, triflers, wavering, witless, without counsel, feeble, careless, rash, proud, dainty, nice, tale-bearers, eves-droppers, rumour-raisers, evil-tongued, worse minded, and in every wise doltified with the dregs of the devil's dunghill.”

epistles of Paul. I would to God, the plowman should sing a text of Scripture at his plough; and that the weaver at his loom would thus drive away the tediousness of time. I would the way-faring man, with this pastime, would expel the weariness of his journey. And in short, I would that all the communication of the Christian should be of the Scripture."

If we come to our own time, it might be made to appear, that abundance of the most serious and valuable people, among the different denominations of men, spend a good portion of their time in this sacred exercise. I observe only, that Romaine studied nothing but the Bible for the last thirty or forty years of his life.

All these examples from ancients and moderns, are produced in this place, to encourage the believer to abound in this divine employ, for the comfort and edification of his own mind. The more intimately we are acquainted with these writings, the more fully shall we be persuaded of their incomparable excellency. Le Clerc tells us, "that while he was compiling his harmony, he was so struck with admiration of the excellent discourses of Jesus, so inflamed with the love of his most holy doctrine, that he thought he but just then began to be acquainted with what he scarce ever laid out of his hands from his infancy." Indeed, the scheme of redemption therein exhibited is most worthy of acceptance, admirably calculated to make all mankind virtuous and happy, could all mankind see its excellence, feel its necessity, and submit to its righteous requirements. Far are we from wishing you to pay a blind submission to every thing that goes under the name of religion. Very far are we from desiring you to believe as we believe, or to act in every respect as we think right to act. Prize the liberty wherewith God hath providentially made you free. Use your own reason, but use it soberly. Beware of vain and spurious pretensions. Be upon

your guard against a sophistical philosophy, the fashionable folly of the present day. To sound philosophy we have no objection ; but when a spurious kind of wisdom, falsely called philosophy, would rob us of our Bible, to which we are all more indebted than we are willing to confess(7), we must say of it as Cicero said of the twelve tables :—“ Though all should be offended I will speak what I think. Truly the little book of the twelve Tables alone, whether we consider the several chapters, or regard it as the foundation of all our laws, exceeds the libraries of all

(7) Steel says, “ the greatest pleasures with which the imagination can be entertained are to be found in Sacred Writ, and even the style of Scripture is more than human.”

We have an account of Henry Willis, farmer, aged 81, deceased, who had devoted almost every hour that could be spared from his labour, during the course of so long a life, to the devout and serious perusal of the holy Scriptures. He had read, with the most minute attention, all the books of the Old and New Testament eight times over ; and had proceeded as far as the book of Job in the ninth reading, when his meditations were terminated by death.

A still more excellent account we have in the Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain. In a conversation with Mr. Johnson, he gives the following pleasing account of himself: “ Blessed be God, through his mercy, I learnt to read when I was a boy.—I believe there is no day for the last thirty years, that I have not peeped at my Bible. If we can't find time to read a chapter, I defy any man to say he can't find time to read a-verse ; and a single text, well followed and put in practice every day, would make no bad figure at the year's end ; 365 texts, without the loss of a moment's time, would make a pretty stock, a little golden treasury, as one may say, from new year's day to new year's day ; and if children were brought up to it, they would come to look for their text, as naturally as they do for their breakfast.—I can say the greatest part of the Bible by heart. I have led but a lonely life, and have often had but little to eat ; but my Bible has been meat, drink and company to me—and when want and trouble have come upon me, I don't know what I should have done indeed, if I had not had the promises of this book for my stay and support.”

Let no man hereafter pretend he cannot find time to read the Sacred Writings. Every person has abundant leisure for the purpose. Find but inclination, and you will soon find time.

the philosophers, as well in the weight of its authority, as in the extent of its utility."

The principles of natural religion are all solid, and founded in the reason and relation of things. The gospel of Christ is equally solid and rational. It takes in, unites, and confirms every principle of nature, and adds a number of circumstances suited to the fallen condition of man. And it calls upon, it invites, it challenges, it commands us to examine its pretensions with all possible care accuracy, and severity.

"Wrong not the Christian; think not reason yours;  
'Tis reason our great Master holds so dear;  
'Tis reason's injured rights his wrath resents;  
'Tis reason's voice obeyed his glories crown.—  
On argument alone our faith is built."

If the gospel had not been agreeable to the most refined principles of human reason, we should never have found the soundest and most perfect reasoners, that ever appeared upon earth, enlist under its banner (8). That it is not universally received, is by no

(8) We may add, that the most active, useful and benevolent characters in our own enlightened day, have been the firmest believers in the writings of the Old and New Testaments. John Wesley spent his whole life, time, strength, and fortune, in spreading the knowledge of Christ and his word. John Howard was equally active in advancing the same cause, in a way as unprecedented as it was useful. He was a firm believer in the Scriptures, and a very serious and conscientious Christian.

Bolingbroke tells the world, that the "resurrection of letters was a fatal period: the Christian system has been attacked, and wounded too, very severely since that time. Christianity has been in decay ever since the resurrection of letters." The late king of Prussia has the same sentiment: "Hobbes, Collins, Shaftesbury, and Bolingbroke in England, and their disciples, have given religion a mortal blow."

These two men are mistaken. They confound pure evangelical religion with superstition. The latter we grant, and we glory in the truth, has received a mortal blow; but the former is as unshakeable as the throne of the Eternal. One of the most extraordinary philosophers of the present age, was the late David Rittenhouse, of America. Dr. Rush, who is an able philosopher and

means to be ascribed, either to its want of due evidence or to its being an irrational scheme; but to causes of a very different nature. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them." This view ought to alarm the fears, and rouse the attention of every man living; but especially of our unbelieving and sceptical countrymen. Rejection of the truths of religion is always in the Sacred Writings ascribed to a fault in the heart and will, rather than to any defect in the head. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.—If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.—The wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.—The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein." Say not then, that you would believe if you could. Deceive not yourselves by all edging want of evidence. Tell us no longer of the absurdities and contradictions of Scripture. The evidence is ample.

(9) The absurdities will vanish, the contradictions

a determined Christian, observes, when speaking of his decease, that "it is no small triumph to the friends of revelation to observe, in this age of infidelity, that our religion has been admitted, and even defended by men of the most exalted understanding, and of the strongest reasoning powers. The single testimony of David Rittenhouse in its favour, outweighs the declamations of whole nations against it."

(9) "Reasonable deists cannot but become Christians, where the gospel shines." These several passages of the Sacred Writings account sufficiently for the infidelity of our several deistical writers. Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Gibbon, Paine, and most others, of whom I have had knowledge, seem to have been destitute of the proper state of mind for the investigation of religious truth. "From several conversations, which it has been my chance to have with unbelievers, I have learned, that ignorance of the nature of our religion, and a disinclination to study both it and

will cease, when once your minds are brought into an humble, teachable, and religious frame; when the veil is taken from your hearts, and scales have fallen from your eyes. Deny yourselves, therefore. Cease to live in sin. Mortify your lusts and passions. Part with the pride of false philosophy. Live in humility, purity, and virtue. Be good moral men, conscientious worshippers of God, upon your own principles, sober inquirers after truth, praying for divine direction, and it will not be long before you become believers in Jesus Christ. No moral man can, rationally, wish to reject the gospel; because it is all purity and goodness, and the most powerful means, with which the world was ever favoured, of making us virtuous and good.

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“ In his blest life  
 I see the path; and in his death the price;  
 And in his great ascent, the proof supreme  
 Of immortality.”

For, whatever was the cause, it is plain in fact, that human reason, unassisted, failed mankind in its great and proper business of morality; and, therefore, he that shall be at the pains of collecting all the moral rules of the ancient philosophers, and compare them with those contained in the New Testament, will find them to come infinitely short of the morality delivered

its evidence, are to be reckoned among the chief causes of infidelity.”

Allix's Reflections upon the books of the holy Scripture, contain a large number of valuable thoughts, and should be read in opposition to all the flimsy objections of the above deists. Kett's Sermons sufficiently invalidate the sophistry of Gibbon. Much satisfactory light has lately been thrown upon the plagues of Egypt, by Bryant. The Old Testament has been defended against the attacks of Paine by David Levi, a learned Jew, with considerable ability. But of all single books, none is equal to the admirable course of Lectures by Doddridge; a work which no inquisitive Christian should be without in his library.

by our Saviour, and taught by his Apostles.(70) Add to this, that no other religion which was ever in the world, hath made provision for pardoning the sins of mankind, and restoring us to the divine favour, in a way consistent with the perfections and government of the Supreme Being.

You will give these reasonings the weight which you suppose they deserve. If you seriously and conscientiously think there is nothing in them worthy of your attention, by all means reject them. If any of you are convinced by what is advanced, that you have hitherto been mistaken, in rejecting Jesus Christ and his gospel; or if you see ground to suspect you may be wrong; let no consideration of shame induce you to deny your convictions or suspicions. Many men have been mistaken as well as you. I myself have seen reason to change several opinions, which before I had thought founded in truth. Every person, indeed, must naturally and necessarily at first be a stranger to the gospel-redemption. Our efforts, therefore, should be made to become acquainted with it, and to get into the good and right way. If we look back

(70) "Is it bigotry to believe in the sublime truths of the gospel with full assurance of faith?—I glory in such bigotry: I would not part with it for a thousand worlds; I congratulate the man who is possessed of it; for amidst all the vicissitudes and calamities of the present state, that man enjoys an inexhaustible fund of consolation, of which it is not in the power of fortune to deprive him."

"There is not a book on earth so favourable to all the kind, and all the sublime affections, or so unfriendly to hatred and persecution, to tyranny, injustice, and every sort of malevolence as the gospel.—It breathes nothing throughout but mercy, benevolence, and peace."

Paine reflects upon the Scripture for being deficient in moral precepts. I defy him, however, or any other deist in the world, to produce from all the stores of heathen writings, any thing equal or second to Christ's Sermon on the Mount; to the 12th chapter of Romans, or to the 13th chapter of the 1st Corinthians. Let any man shew us a system of morality equal unto these passages. The truth is, Paine knows very little of the matter.

upon the foregoing pages, we shall see that several of the characters there mentioned had been much led astray. Through different means, however, they discovered their error. They acknowledged their fault. They lamented their sin. They laid aside their prepossessions, and sought for the truth with all their skill and abilities. They were convinced in their understanding; (1) converted in their hearts; they believed in the Redeemer; obeyed his gospel; and through infinite and unmerited grace, were eternally saved. Why then should not you pursue the same measures, if you have any suspicions every thing is not with you as it should be? You must allow, if the gospel-account of things be true, it is inconceivably important. Treat it not, therefore, with contempt, neglect, indifference, but examine the matter to the bottom. Follow the example of West and Lyttleton, and let no man lead you by the nose to destruction, or sneer you out of salvation. Examine the evidence, and, with all simplicity and humility of mind, judge according to that evidence. And if you are finally convinced, that Jesus is the Christ, act nobly, confess his name, like Rochester, (2) to the

(1) The reader will find a very clear and concise account of the true foundation of all human knowledge in the letters of Euler to a German princess. This extraordinary man, second to none but Newton, was a serious and conscientious Christian, and avowed his belief in Christ upon all proper occasions. And while his great master declared that he found "more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible, than in any profane history whatever;" he writes to the above princess, that "the holy life of the apostles and of the other primitive Christians appeared to him an irresistible proof of the truth of the Christian religion."

(2) We have another very respectable and honourable instance of this nature to present to the reader, which has just taken place, and which others of our deistical brethren would find their advantage in imitating: Dr. Okely published an Octavo volume, entitled "Pyrology, or the Connection between Natural and Moral Philosophy, with a Disquisition on the Origin of Christianity;" in which it was completely exploded, together with the doctrine of a future state. It has pleased God, however, to shew Dr.

teeth of his opposers, and strive like him, to undo all the mischief you may have been the occasion of to others.

“ But, if we should be so seriously religious, as you seem to think necessary, we shall lose all the comforts of life, and become dull and melancholy.”

If this were true, one hour’s enjoyment of the glory of heaven would more than make amends for all your present loss. It is not, however, true. The ways of godliness are grievously belied. For there is no happiness like the happiness of religion, even in the

Okely, the vanity of his philosophy, and he has done himself the honour to publish the following manly renunciation of his errors:

“ The author of *Pyrology* feels himself irresistibly impelled to make known, that he is now thoroughly convinced of the moral government of God, the immortality of the human soul, or future state, and of the truth of christianity in its fullest extent. For his involuntary error he confidently hopes to be pardoned by Almighty God, through the merits of Jesus Christ; but at the same time he thinks it his duty, in this public manner to solicit the pardon of his readers for having, as much as in him lay, though he trusts ineffectually, contributed to lead them astray.”

There are other conversions in the present day from deism to christianity besides this of Dr. Okely, and those which we have already mentioned. Dr. Vanderkemp, a Dutch physician, was convinced and recovered from infidelity by an alarming providence, and devoted himself as a missionary for the conversion of the heathen. Captain Wilson is another remarkable instance, who, in gratitude to God for his goodness to him, undertook to convey the missionaries to the Southern Ocean, and has accomplished the undertaking with great and surprising success without putting the Society to the smallest expense.

Henry Redhead Yorke, who was sentenced to a long imprisonment for sedition, is another instance of a person, whose mind has undergone a great change during his imprisonment, and he has been open and honest enough to avow it.

“ The vices and frauds of the professors of christianity have nothing to do with christianity itself. To know what it is, we must look to the only proper place, *the Scriptures*. The Christian religion is peculiar to itself; it has nothing in common with the other systems of religion which have existed in the world. It has God for its founder, and reason for its basis.—It is every where uniform, consistent and complete.”

present world; and no peace like that of God, which passeth all understanding.

“ The men of grace have found  
 Glory begun below ;  
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground,  
 From faith and hope do grow.  
 The hill of Sion yields  
 A thousand sacred sweets.  
 Before we reach the heavenly fields,  
 Or walk the golden streets.”

“ But—I shall be singular!”—This is partly true, and partly otherwise. And suppose you are singular; how will this injure you? You will have the approbation of your own mind. You will have God, and Christ, and angels, and all good men your friends. And is not this sufficient, but you must have the approbation of the devil and all his servants too, the children of vice and folly? Mistake not, the approbation of both is incompatible. *You cannot serve God and Mammon*; neither can you have the friendship of God, Christ, angels, and good men, and at the same time possess the approbation of the devil, and his servants, whose portion is in this life. The thing is impossible. You may as well attempt to reconcile light and darkness, fire and water, heaven and hell.—But suppose you should become a convert of the gospel of Christ, and be truly in earnest about the salvation of your soul, and, of course, singular in your way and manner of life; what inconvenience would you sustain? or what real dishonour would you undergo? Was not Socrates singular among the Athenians? Were not Enoch and Noah singular among the Antediluvians? Was not Abraham singular in Canaan, and Lot in Sodom? Were not Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and the prophets very singular persons in their day? Our blessed Lord, his holy Apostles, and all the primitive Christians, were they not uniformly the same? And where was the misfortune of all this?

When we read the story of these ancient worthies, don't we admire their wisdom, their courage, their choice, and their noble superiority to all those poor creatures who opposed them, and cast out their name as evil? What man of taste does not approve the conduct of Abdiel in Milton? Never character was more enviable, or more worthy of imitation:

— “The seraph Abdiel faithful found  
 Among the faithless, faithful only he;  
 Among innumerable false, unmov'd,  
 Unshaken, unseduc'd unterrify'd,  
 His loyalty he kept, his love his zeal;  
 Nor number, nor example with him wrought  
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind  
 Though single. From amidst them forth he pass'd  
 Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustain'd  
 Superior, nor of violence fear'd ought;  
 And with retorted scorn his back he turn'd  
 On those proud tow'rs to swift destruction doom'd.—

— Gladly then he mix'd  
 With his own friendly pow'rs, who him receiv'd  
 With joy and acclamation loud, that one  
 That of so many myriads fall'n, yet one  
 Return'd not lost. On to the sacred hill  
 They led him high-applauded, and present  
 Before the seat supreme; from whence a voice,  
 From 'midst a golden cloud, thus mild was heard:  
 “Servant of God, well done, well hast thou fought  
 The better fight, who single hast maintain'd  
 Against revolted multitudes the cause  
 Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms;  
 And for the testimony of truth hast borne  
 Universal reproach, far worse to bear  
 Than violence; for this was all thy care  
 To stand approv'd in sight of God, though worlds  
 Judg'd thee perverse.”

From all these considerations it is evident, that there are times and circumstances, when if a man will be truly religious, and preserve an unshaken fidelity to his Creator and his Saviour, he must be singular; he must step aside; he must beg to be excused in a variety of cases. He must be singular, or lose his soul. Let not the fear of this odious imputation deter

any man from exemplary piety. The giddy multitude, and the sons and daughters of pleasure, *falsely so called*, may pretend to sneer and deride; but yet notwithstanding, they will secretly applaud your virtuous conduct. There is a certain dignity, a real nobility, a secret charm, in a consistently religious character, which none can despise.(3) And sooner or later, the whole human race will be of one opinion concerning it.

Instead of being heroes in wickedness then, or ring-leaders in the cause of infidelity, for there are not a few who make a mock at sin, and glory in their shame, let it be your highest ambition to become Christian heroes;(4) heroes who can forgive, and love, and bless your enemies; who can conquer the world, and all your own degenerate propensities; heroes, whose heads are big only with schemes of mercy and of kindness; whose hands are continually stretched out in prayer and acts of benevolence! and who are never at ease, but in going about doing good to the bodies and souls of men; heroes(5) in whom religion

(3) Peterborough, more famed for wit than religion, when he lodged with Fenelon at Cambray, was so charmed with his piety and virtue, that he exclaimed at parting: "If I stay here any longer I shall become a Christian in spite of myself."

(4) Steel's Christian Hero, is a little book worth the attention of the reader who is disposed to reject the gospel. It contains an argument to prove, that no principles but those of religion are sufficient to make a great man. In this little book we have a comparison between the characters of Cato and Cæsar, Brutus and Cassius, Jesus Christ and Paul. These heathens make but a very poor figure, when placed by the side of these Christian heroes.

(5) One of the most illustrious heroes that England ever bred, a man equally celebrated for valour, for genius, and for learning, was not ashamed to address his wife in the views of approaching dissolution in the following pious strain:— Love God, and begin betimes. In him you shall find true, everlasting, and endless comfort. When you have travelled and wearied yourself with all sorts of worldly cogitations, you shall sit down by sorrow in the end. Teach your son also to serve and fear God whilst he is young, that the fear of God may grow up in him. Then will God be an hus-

sits, as it were, in triumph, with all the passions in subjection around her; with all the lustre that wisdom, and prudence, and piety, and learning, and good sense, and good breeding, can bestow to make you amiable; heroes in short, whose daily endeavour is to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to visit the sick, to instruct the ignorant, to be a father to the fatherless, a husband to the widows, and a friend to the friendless of all parties and denominations of men. If such is your heroism, the ear will bless when it hears you; the eye will give witness when it sees you; the blessing of him that is ready to perish will come upon you; and the widow's heart will dance in your presence for joy. Simple as this account may seem, it is an heroism to which few, comparatively, ever attain, or of which they have any idea. It will require all your fortitude, and the utmost stretch of your best powers. In pursuing such a line of conduct, in conjunction with your temporal occupation, you will be employed usefully and comfortably while you live, and you will be training up for "the general assembly, and church of the first-born which are written in heaven," when you die. "Be strong in the Lord, then, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." Let the advice of Locke, which is both wise and seasonable, be acceptable in your eyes. It will assuredly do you no harm, and if you pay due attention to it, it will do you eternal good. He himself was an example of his own precepts. For fourteen or fifteen years he applied himself closely to the study of the Holy Scripture, and employed the last period of his life hardly in any

band to you, and a father to him, an husband and a father that can never be taken from you."

This is true heroism! Such was Sir Walter Raleigh.

thing beside. He was never weary of admiring the grand views of that sacred book, and the just relation of all its parts. He every day made discoveries in it, that gave him fresh cause of admiration. And so earnest was he for the comfort of his friends, and the diffusion of sacred knowledge among them, that even the day before he died "he particularly exhorted all about him to read the Holy Scriptures, exalting the love which God shewed to man in justifying him by faith in Jesus Christ, and returning him special thanks for having called him to the knowledge of that divine Saviour." To a person who asked him, which was the shortest and surest way for a young gentleman to attain to the true knowledge of the Christian religion, in the full and just extent of it, he replied—"Let him study the Holy Scripture, especially the New Testament. Therein are contained the words of eternal life.—It hath God for its author—Salvation for its end—and Truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.(6)"

This is a noble testimony, both in life and in death, from this Christian philosopher. Many hundreds of a similar nature might be laid before the reader, besides those which we have already selected. And

(6) Lavater, after predicting, like Newton and Hartley, the spread of infidelity, thus expresses himself concerning the truth of the gospel: "If God has not spoken and acted through Christ, then there never has been a God who hath acted and spoken. If Christ is the work of chance, then man and the whole world is the work of chance also. If Christ did not want the assistance of a God to the performance of his wonderful deeds, nature also can perform her works without the interference of a God."

Compare with the above the death-bed scene of Garzo, the grand father of Petrarch; who was so celebrated for his probity and good sense, that he was frequently consulted by philosophers, and the learned of those times. "After living to the age of 104, in innocence and good works, he died, as Plato did, on the day of his birth, and in the bed in which he was born. His death resembled a quiet sleep. He expired, surrounded by his family, without pain or uneasiness, while he was conversing about God and virtue."

there is no kind of reading, that is so edifying, as the final scenes of those persons, who have been eminent in their day, either for their virtues or their vices. A death bed is usually a detector of the heart. And to see a fellow mortal in the ruins of nature, glorying over the King of Terrors, in all his most horrible forms, is by far the grandest spectacle that can be exhibited upon earth. It is, as Seneca observes of Cato, a sight worthy of God to look down upon. What are all the triumphs of kings and conquerors, when compared with the triumphs of abundance of the children of the Most High in all ages? The Bible contains a rich compendium of these religious worthies. The Book of Martyrs records a noble army of valiant souls, who went through fire and water, through racks and tortures, to their blood-bought reward.

So far as I myself am concerned, whether it shall please the gracious Ruler of the world to call me hence by a storm of persecution, by the enmity of secret adversaries, or in the natural course of Providence, I, above all things upon earth, desire to quit this mortal scene in a fiery chariot of divine love, and heavenly rapture. The celebrated Scaliger was so delighted with that stanza of Sternhold and Hopkins in the 18th psalm :

“ On Cherub and on Cherubim  
Full royally he rode ;  
And on the wings of mighty winds  
Came flying all abroad :”—

that he used to profess, he had rather have been the author of it, than to have enjoyed the kingdom of Arragon.

I have seen so many lukewarm Christians quit the world in such a doubting, timorous, uncomfortable, miserable manner, that I solemnly declare I had rather, if it please God, take my leave of this earthly tabernacle with my faith, hope, love, peace, and joy in full exercise, and go with all my sails unfurled into

the haven of eternal rest, than be made emperor of the whole universe. I well know professions like these will subject me to the charge of intemperate zeal and enthusiasm. Such charges, however, I most cordially despise, and hold the philosophic authors of them in as much pity and contempt, as they can entertain for the warm and zealous Christian. I want not to quit the stage of life in the spirit of Bolingbroke, Hume, Gibbon, Chesterfield, Godwin, and other such like characters. The feeling, sensible, confident, joyful approbation of heaven, is above all estimation; and the praise of men of loose morals, or pharisaical professions, is of little consideration in my esteem. I wish them wiser and better, and that they may see their error before it is too late. Several of those worthy persons, whose names we have here recorded, died bearing a noble testimony to evangelical truth. Their condition was enviable. To many such I myself have been a joyful witness in the course of my poor ministrations. But the death-bed scene, which above all others I have either read or seen, that seems to have had in it the largest share of divine communications,(7) is that of the Rev. John Janeway, who died at the age of twenty-four, in June 1657.

If it should appear too rapturous, consider, what your feelings would be, should news be brought that you were left heir to an estate of immense value, which you had but little reason to expect. If, when the Israelites had passed the red sea in safety, they saw it right to sing a song of triumph for their deliverance, and to praise the Lord with timbrels and with dances; if when the same people were delivered

(7) The serious reader will find the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's influence upon the mind, ably defended against our modern luke-warm professors of religion from the charge of enthusiasm, in Pearson on the Creed, a work with which every Christian should be intimately acquainted, in these times of abounding licentiousness both of principle and practice.

from the Babylonish captivity, they "went out with joy, and were led forth with peace, the mountains and the hills breaking forth before them into singing, and all the trees of the field clapping their hands; if then the lame man leaped as an hart, the tongue of the dumb sung, and the ransomed of the Lord returned, and came to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, joy and gladness going before them, and sorrow and sighing fleeing away" at their advance: if when king David brought the ark, a symbol of the Divine presence, unto Sion, he danced before it in all his might, with shouting, and the sound of the trumpet, while the envious and malignant Michal severely censured his pious hilarity; if, when the same royal enthusiast(8) was only banished from the tabernacle of God, he affectionately cried out—"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul is athirst for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?—My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee; my soul followeth hard after thee; my soul gaspeth after thee as a thirsty land:"—and if, when this same enviable fanatic came to die, he again cried out in the full assurance of faith—"He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire:" if, when the lame beggar, who had been healed by Peter and John, entered with them into the temple, he walked, and leaped, and praised God, the Scribes and Pharisees being all in arms against them: if, when Paul and Silas had been scourged and imprisoned for the name of the Lord Jesus, they prayed in the dungeon at midnight, and

(8) It is a common mistake to suppose that none but religious people are enthusiasts. Enthusiasm is found in every form and species of human life. The orator and the poet, the hero and the politician, the intolerant advocate for toleration, and the projective defenders of Christianity, may all be enthusiasts.

sang praises unto God, for the honour conferred upon them, and in believing views of the reward which awaited them: and if, when Popery is overturned, the whole triumphant host is represented as crying aloud—“ Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!”

If there has been, and would be, and ought to be, such ardent desire, and such rapturous joy and triumph upon all these very inferior occasions; shall not a man, who has long been buffeted by the world, entangled and seduced by the flesh, and vilely tempted by the foul apostate Spirit; and who, notwithstanding, has for a good season been living under a strong and vigorous sense of *the knowledge of salvation by the remission of his sins*, and a sweet experimental union and communion with God, the father of spirits, through the infinitely perfect obedience and all-atonning death of his begotten Son, by the communications of the eternal Spirit; “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” with exceedingly great and triumphant joy,(9) when he is within sight of land, driving with the wind and tide into the haven of rest, just upon the point of taking assured possession of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away?”(80).

“ What heart of stone, but glows at thoughts like these?  
 Such contemplations mount us; and should mount  
 The mind still higher; nor ever glance on man,  
 Unraptur'd, uninflam'd.”

(9) Why may not a man, who makes it his main concern in life, to serve God and save his soul alive, expect peculiar manifestations of the divine favour? It is certain that the promises of Scripture to this purpose are extremely strong and numerous, and the examples not less so. There are in the Bible upwards of an hundred of these special manifestations to the servants of God recorded.

(80) Priestley considers these strong consolations in the views of approaching dissolution, as enthusiasm.

If ever mortal lived the life of an angel upon earth, Janeway seems to have been the man. How far do the enjoyments even of lively christians fall short of those lengths, and breadths, and heights, and depths of the love of Christ with which he was favoured? To evince this, I will present the reader with a short sketch of his dying scene, and leave him to judge, whether he ever saw or perused any account of an exit so far beyond the common run of christians. And yet, by the grace of God, and a diligent use of the divinely appointed means, this, or something like this, might be the attainment of all.

He was born in the year 1633, at Tylly, in Hertfordshire. At about twelve years old, he had made a considerable proficiency in mathematic science, and in the study of astronomy, and other parts of useful literature. At seventeen he was admitted to King's College in Cambridge. At eighteen it pleased God to enlighten his understanding, and to give him the knowledge and experience of evangelical truth. Baxter's Saints Everlasting Rest became his favourite book. This he read, studied, imitated. Now he knew that astronomy, with which he was so delighted, surveyed but a dunghill in comparison of that system of things which the religion of Jesus contemplates. Stars are but dirty clods, when compared with that glory which lies beyond the reach of the highest human contemplation. He was now, therefore, wholly occupied with divine contemplations, and tasted so much sweetness in the knowledge of Christ, that it was discernible in his very appearance, and he counted every thing but dross and dung, in comparison of the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified. Not that he looked upon human learning as useless: but when fixed below Christ, not improved for Christ, or set in opposition to Christ; he looked upon wisdom as folly, upon learning as madness, and upon genius as a curse, which would

make a man more like the devil, more fit for his service, and put a greater accent upon our misery in another world.

At the age of twenty he was admitted a fellow of his college. Still, however, he went on with his religious contemplations, and became so mighty in prayer, and other sacred exercises, that he forgot the weakness of his body, and injured his health. He studied much, prayed much, and laboured much in every way he could contrive to be of use to mankind, and to promote the honour of the Divine Being. Sickness coming on, he was never permitted to preach but twice. His disorder, which was of the consumptive kind, increased rapidly upon him, but yet with some intervals of relief. During the greatest part of his sickness, however, he was so filled with love, and peace, and joy, that human language sinks under what he saw and felt. During the greatest part of his illness, he talked as if he had been in the third heavens; breaking out every now and then into ecstasies of joy and praise. Not a word dropped from his mouth but it breathed of Christ and heaven. He talked as if he had been with Jesus, and came from the immediate presence of God. At one time he said:—"Stand and wonder; come, look upon a dying man and wonder. Was there ever greater kindness? Were there ever more sensible manifestations of rich grace? Why me, Lord? why me? Sure this is akin to heaven. And if I were never to enjoy more than this, it were well worth all the torments men and devils could invent. If this be dying, dying is sweet. Let no christian ever be afraid of dying. Death is sweet to me! This bed is soft. Christ's arms, his smiles, and visits, sure they would turn hell into heaven! Oh! that you did but see and feel what I do! Come, and behold a dying man, more cheerful than ever you saw any healthful man in the midst of his sweetest enjoyments. Worldly pleasures are pitiful, poor, sorry

things, compared with one glimpse of his glory which shines so strongly into my soul. Why should any of you be so sad, when I am so glad! This is the hour that I have waited for."

About forty-eight hours before his dissolution he said again:—

"Praise is now my work, and I shall be engaged in that sweet employment for ever. Come, let us lift up our voice in praise. I have nothing else to do. I have done with prayer, and all other ordinances. I have almost done conversing with mortals. I shall presently be beholding Christ himself, that died for me, and loved me, and washed me in his blood. I shall in a few hours be in eternity, singing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb. I shall presently stand upon mount Sion with an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. I shall hear the voice of much people, and be one amongst them who say—Hallelujah! salvation, glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God! And again we say, Hallelujah! Methinks I stand as it were one foot in heaven, and the other on earth. Methinks I hear the melody of heaven, and by faith I see the angels waiting to carry my soul to the bosom of Jesus, and I shall be for ever with the Lord in glory. And who can choose but rejoice in all this?"

In such a rapturous strain as this he continued, full of praise, full of admiration, full of joy, till at length, with abundance of faith and fervency, he cried aloud: "Amen! Amen!" and soon after expired.(1)

(1) Jaffeway arrived at these high attainments in the divine life, by a constant perusal of his Bible; a frequent perusal of Baxter's *Saints Everlasting Rest*, a book for which multitudes will have cause to bless God for ever; and by spending a due proportion of every day in secret prayer, and devout contemplation.

Mirandola, who died in the flower of his age, after he had for some time quitted all his great employments under Charles the fifth,

And now, with sentiments of the most benevolent and affectionate regard, for every human being, whether Jew, Turk, Infidel, Heretic, or Christian, I submit these reflections, concerning religion and

was esteemed the most beautiful person of that age, and a man of the most exalted genius; and yet, after having read all that could be read, and learnt every thing that could then be learned, he wrote to his nephew, an officer in the army: "I make it my humble request to you, that you would not fail to read the holy Scriptures night and morning with great attention; for as it is our duty to meditate upon the law of God day and night, so nothing can be more useful; because there is in the holy Scriptures a celestial and efficacious power, inflaming the soul with divine fear and love."

Spencer, though a man of dissipation in his youth, in his more advanced years entered into the interior of religion, and his two hymns on heavenly love, and heavenly beauty, hath expressed all the height and depth of Janeway's experience:

" Then shalt thou feel thy spirit so possest,  
 And ravish'd with devouring great desire  
 Of his dear self, that shall thy feeble breast  
 Inflame with love, and set thee all on fire  
 With burning zeal, through every part entire,  
 That in no earthly thing thou shalt delight,  
 But in his sweet and amiable sight.—  
 Then shall thy ravish'd soul inspired be  
 With heav'nly thoughts, far above human skill,  
 And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainly see  
 Th' idea of his pure glory present still  
 Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill  
 With sweet enrageament of celestial love,  
 Kindled through sight of those fair things above."

Spencer's religion was "a religion of feeling;" which is unquestionably the religion of the Bible. "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

This same devout and heavenly spirit breathes strongly in all the old authors. Augustine is famous for it; so were several others of the ancient fathers of the church. Thomas a Kempis is excelled by none in this way. Bernard is very pious. His hymn on the name Jesus is in a high strain of this kind.

" Desidero te millies,  
 Mi Jesus! quando venies?  
 Me latum quando facies?  
 Me de te quando saties?"

the Sacred Writings, to your most serious consideration. What impression they may make upon your minds, is known only to the God of the spirits of all flesh.(2) My earnest request to you, is, that you

Augustine's hymn, which begins,

“ *Ad perennis vita fontem  
Mens sitivit arida ;* ”

is in the same strain ; and has been imitated in that favourite old hymn recorded in the Pilgrim's Guide.

“ *Jerusalem, my happy home,  
O' that I were in thee;  
O would my woes were at an end,  
Thy joys that I might see !* ” &c. &c..

Almost every thing of this kind, however, which has been left us by our forefathers, is written in a stile highly depraved, and is usually equally devout and superstitious. The pious reader, therefore, will be upon his guard in the perusal of such authors, and take the good, and cast the bad away. The Bible alone is free from human weakness.

(2) If the reader should find himself dissatisfied with this Plea for Religion and the Sacred Writings, let him by no means give up the cause as desperate, but rather let him lay it aside, and have recourse to those more able and explicit treatises, which I have occasionally recommended. Or, if he thinks himself capable of rendering a more effectual service to the cause of evangelical truth, let him take up his own pen, and confound the enemies of religion. Learned laymen, especially, should come forward in vindication of the gospel ; since every thing which proceeds from the clergy on religion, is supposed to spring from a self-interested source. Wilberforce has done himself much honour. He is a bold and able advocate for a much injured cause. Nor less so is Miss Moore. She is a credit to her sex, and a blessing to her country. It is scarcely possible, however, for authors on this subject to be too numerous. We are not wanting in clerical writers ; but those who have treated on subjects purely religious, among the other ranks of society, are, comparatively few ; and especially among the princes and nobles of the land. Walpole has given us a catalogue of the royal and noble authors of England, Scotland, and Ireland since the conquest ; and he produces only, during all those ages, 10 English princes, 92 peers, and 14 peeresses. To these he adds 24 Scotch royal and noble authors, with 11 Irish peers : In all about 150 ; a small number, when it is considered they are usually the best educated men in the country.

will give them a fair and dispassionate hearing, and seek truth, at least, with as much warmth and assiduity, as we usually employ in our secular pursuits. No man ever succeeded greatly in life, who did not embark zealously in its concerns. No man ever became a good scholar, without much time and application. And no man ever made any considerable proficiency in things divine, till all the leading powers of his soul were engaged therein. Permit me then to exhort you to be in earnest in your religious inquiries. Apply your minds with zeal and impartiality to the investigation of sacred wisdom. This is the concern, the duty, the privilege, the glory of every human being. The most ancient and sublime author in the world hath exhausted all the treasures of nature to express its intrinsic value. "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found

In Germany have been published in the course of six years, from 1785 to 1790, no less a number than 27,462 books, on the following subjects, and in these proportions:

General Literature	68
Philology	1527
Divinity	4863
Jurisprudence	2158
Medicine and Surgery	1898
Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy	965
Education	506
Politics and Finance	1885
Military Sciences	154
Physics and Natural History	1729
Arts and Manufactures	1100
Mathematics	581
Geography and History	4779
Belles Lettres	3798
History of Literature	762
Miscellaneous	689
	27,462

The average number of books published in Germany from 1785 to the close of the year 1797, is 5,360 annually.

in the land of the living. The depth saith, it is not in me: and the sea saith, it is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels or fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls; for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?—Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

If such be the value of wisdom, the search will undoubtedly repay the labour. But have we any assurance that the inestimable treasure may be found? The wisest of men will answer to our satisfaction: " My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thy ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God—thou shalt understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." All this implies the greatest possible attention to our religious concerns.

With these fine sentiments I take my leave, " commending you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, if you will submit to its authority, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." If you are right, in your present state of mind, may you continue in the right way to the end of your days, and increase and abound therein more and more. However, you should be extremely cautious how you contradict and

blaspheme what so many wise and good men esteem the truth of God, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets—*Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish!*—Speaking modestly, your situation is not altogether without danger. It is impossible you should be perfectly satisfied all is as you could wish.(3)

“ Since then we die but once, and after death  
 Our state no alteration knows,  
 But when we have resign'd our breath  
 Th' immortal spirit goes  
 To endless joys, or everlasting woes;  
 Wise is the man, who labours to secure  
 That mighty and important stake,  
 And by all methods strives to make  
 His passage safe, and his reception sure.”

As to myself; I am thoroughly satisfied with that God, that Redeemer, and that Sanctifier whom the Christian Scriptures hold out to the view and acceptance of mankind. I am perfectly pleased with those Scriptures,(4) and with all the divine dispensations

(3) “ To doubt of the gospel is folly: to reject it is madness.”

Let the sceptical reader consult Robertson's Discourse on the Situation of the World at the Time of Christ's Appearance, and its Connection with the Success of his Religion.

(4) When I have spoken above in such strong terms of the volume of Revelation, it is by no means intended to cast any slight upon the volume of Nature. While we daily study the former, we shall do well to pay all due attention to the latter, according to our opportunities of investigation. To an enlightened observer, they both carry indubitable marks of their great original. “ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the earth is full of his riches.” The most perfect catalogue of stars, before Herschel appeared, did not contain quite 5000: but by the vast superiority of his glasses, he hath discovered 44,000 stars in a few degrees of the heavens; and by the same proportion, it is supposed that 75,000,000 are exposed in the expanse to human investigation. Lalande supposes that a glass of Herschel's power may discover 90 millions of stars in the whole surface of the heavens, and that even this number is but small, in comparison of what exists. All these stars are of a fiery nature, and conjectured to be so many suns with their systems of planets moving round them. We know

therein recorded. Our God hath done, is doing, and will do all things well. It is altogether fit he should govern his own world, and bow the rebellious nations to his sway. The present degenerate state

the sun to be the centre of our system. It is accompanied with 29 planets, besides about 450 comets. What an amazing idea does this give us of the works of God! And if such be the work what must the Workman be!

Every part of nature, with which we are acquainted, is full of living creatures, with stores of every kind to supply their necessities. This little globe of ours is known to contain within its bowels a great variety of valuable minerals, and to be covered with about 20,000 different species of vegetables, 3,000 species of worms, 12,000 species of insects, 200 species of amphibious animals, 550 species of birds, 2,600 species of fish, and 200 species of quadrupeds. How immense then must be the number of individuals!—One fly is found to bring forth 2000 at a time, and a single cod-fish to produce considerably more than three millions and a half of young. Leewenhook tells us, that there are more animals in the melt of a single cod-fish, than there are men upon the whole earth. Over all these creatures preside upwards of 730 millions of human beings. Such is the family of the great Father here upon earth!—And when it is considered, that the earth itself, with all its furniture, is no more, when compared with the whole system of things, than a single grain of sand, when compared with a huge mountain, we are lost in the immensity of God's works, and constrained to cry out, “Lord what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him!” And if to this immensity of the works of creation, we add the admirable structure of the whole, and the exquisite perfection of every part, we shall not fail of being exceedingly affected with the ineffable wisdom of the Divine Architect.—To bring this consideration more within the grasp of human comprehension, let us take to pieces, and examine the several parts of any one creature which God hath made; and we shall find a perfection among its several powers, and an adaptation of its situation in the grand scale of existence, far surpassing human skill. Let the most perfect anatomist, that ever existed, make his observations upon the human frame; let him examine with the greatest possible attention the *tout ensemble* of the structure; then let him proceed to the several parts, of which the microcosm is composed; first, the powers of the mind; the understanding, the will, the memory, the conscience, and the various affections: next the five senses; the touch, the taste, the smell, the hearing, and the sight; afterwards let him proceed to the several fluids of the body; and then to the 300 bones, the 40 different

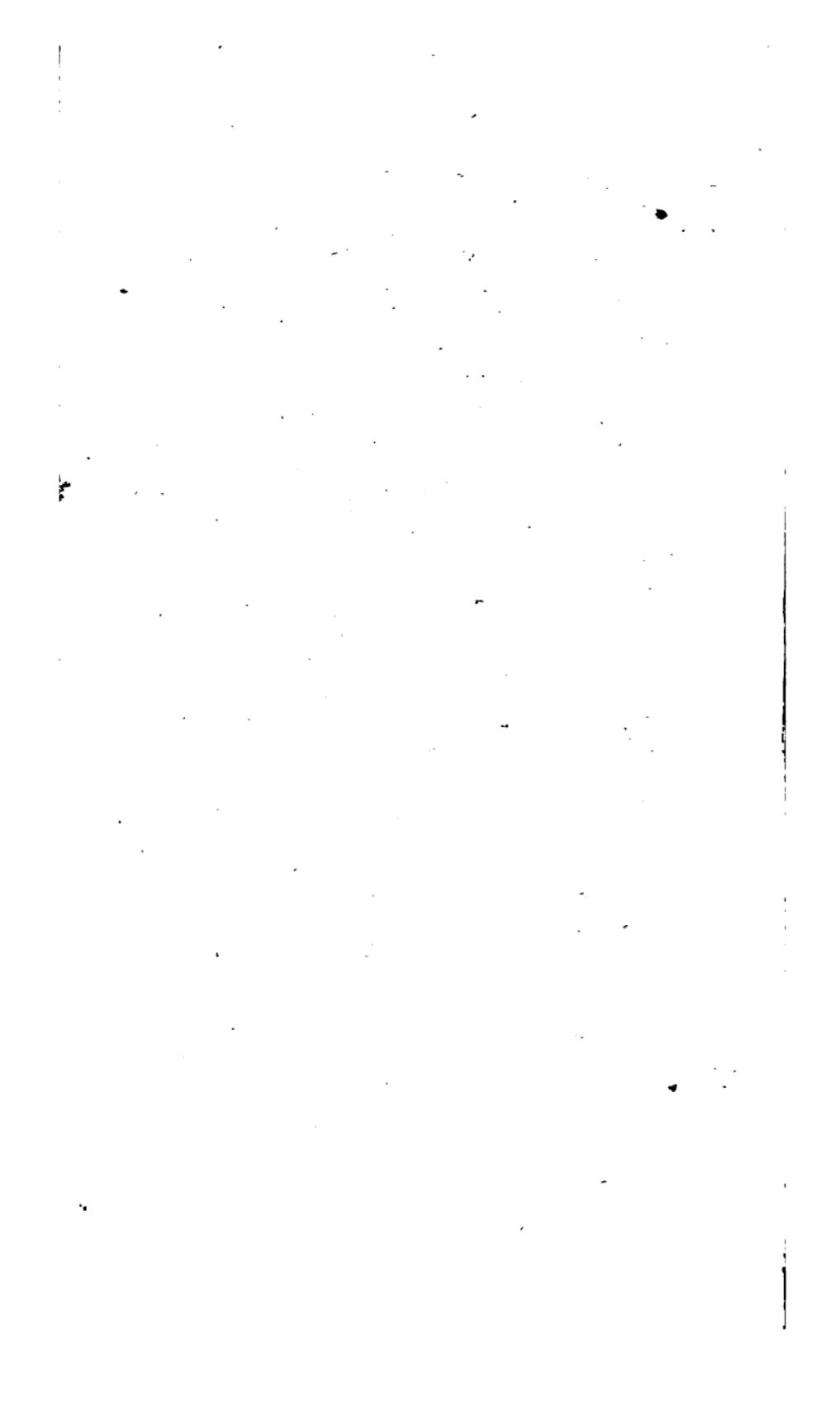
of Christendom is too disgraceful to his government, to be permitted to continue beyond the predicted period. He will, therefore, arise and plead his own cause; and all the wickedness of men, and the convulsions and distress of nations, shall wind up to his eternal credit. "The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient; he sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet." His gospel is no other than the plan devised by infinite wisdom for the melioration of mankind. The immortal seed is sown; the principle of life has vegetated; the little leaven is diffusing itself far and wide. Much has been done; much is doing; much shall be done. Millions of reasonable creatures have already found eternal rest in consequence of the Redeemer's dying love; multitudes of souls at this moment are happy in their own bosoms under a sense of the divine favour: and innumerable myriads of men shall arise, believing in his name, trusting in his mediation, and rejoicing in his salvation, maugre all the opposition of fallen Christians and apostate spirits. Wise and gracious is the Divine Being in all his ways, and he is the Governor among the people. To his service I avowedly devote

sorts of glands, the 466 muscles, the 40 pair of nerves, the fibres, the membranes, the arteries, the veins, the lymphæducts, the excretory vessels, the tendons, the ligaments, the cartilages; and let him explore the whole and every part with the greatest degree of accuracy, knowledge, and judgment that ever centered in man: and then let him honestly say, whether he could suggest the smallest improvement in any one respect. If he were an atheist before such an investigation, like the celebrated Galen he would be converted to the belief of the Divine Existence, would compose an hymn in praise of the Creator of the world, and sing with the great progenitor of mankind:

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good;  
Almighty, thine this universal frame,  
Thus wondrous fair; Thyself how wondrous then!  
Unspeakable! who sitt'st above these heav'ns,  
To us invisible, or dimly seen  
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare  
Thy goodness beyond thought, and pow'r divine."

my feeble powers, as long as he shall vouchsafe me the exercise of them; nor will I cease to speak the honours of his majesty, while the breath continues to actuate this mortal frame. And,

“ When even at last the solemn hour shall come,  
And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,  
I cheerful will obey; there, with new powers,  
Will rising wonders sing: I cannot go  
Where universal love not smiles around,  
Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their sons,  
From seeming evil still educating good,  
And better thence again, and better still,  
In infinite progression.—But I lose  
Myself in Him, in Light Ineffable!  
Come then, expressive silence! muse His praise.”



## APPENDICES.

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I. THE reformation contended for in these papers is a peaceable reform, begun and carried on by the constitution, and by the bishops, and clergy of every denomination. The absolute necessity of such a reformation is founded on the prophetic declarations of Daniel. The nature of the reformation necessary to our lasting preservation as a kingdom, is, that whatever militates against the genuine spirit of Christ's religion in the establishment should be removed; and that all orders of clerical characters should set themselves, with the utmost zeal and determination, first to reform themselves, and then to stop the torrent of iniquity, which threatens to involve the country in the most complete destruction. If the 18,000 clergymen in the establishment would exert themselves for the good of souls with equal zeal and fervour, the established church would not only be safer, but the divine protection would be more effectually engaged on our behalf.—Righteous nations never fall.(1) Unfortu-

(1) Among other unfavourable signs of the times, the vast number of bankruptcies is none of the least. We average six or seven hundred every year, beside all the composition-business, which are still more numerous. But what I chiefly refer to, is, that, of all the instances of defraud, intentional or otherwise, practised upon the public, an instance of after payment is rarely recorded; and whenever such an instance occurs, it is always spoken of with astonishment, as a thing that could not be expected. If a man go upon the high road, or break into your house, and rob you of a few pounds, he is infamous; and if he can be caught, and arraigned, and the thing is proved, he atones for his offence at the expence of his life. But a man, in a way of trade, shall cheat you of hundreds and thousands, shall pay ten, five, or even only two shillings in the pound, and he is a good fellow, a man of hon-

nately, abundance of our order of men are the greatest enemies to the country and vital religion. We promote the interest of Satan more effectually by our indolence, worldly-mindedness, lukewarmness, and misconduct, than all the wicked and immoral characters in the kingdom put together.—Eighteen thousand men, led on by six and twenty bishops, all filled with faith and the Holy Ghost, with an ardent love to Jesus Christ, and with a judicious, but warm and affectionate zeal for the salvation of souls, paid by the state, and sent out into every corner of the land to preach the everlasting gospel! What a glorious consideration! How should we make the ungodly and profane skulk into corners, and hide their impious heads! But, alas! how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! *for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.* Dissenters are increasing, Methodists are multiplying, wickedness is spreading, our churches are emptying, infidelity is pervading all orders of society, and the daughter of Zion is like to be left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. We may look at the neighbouring nations, and learn, at their expense, what our own fate will assuredly ere long be. Who is blind? who is so ignorant? who is so selfish and secure? who is so unread in history? who is so unacquainted with the prophecies? as not to see, that the salvation of Europe is suspended on its wisdom, in

our. He begins again, keeps it up, cuts a dash; cracks again, and all is well. He never dreams, that, upon every principle of justice, honour, and conscience, he is as much a debtor for all his deficiencies as though the law had never acquitted him. What an accumulation of guilt is upon this land on these accounts! Of the many thousands in this country, who fall short in their payments, how few, how extremely few do we meet with, or hear of, who afterwards, like Reyner, call their creditors together, and pay them, what, indeed, is justly due, but what they never could demand!

correcting what is amiss in its morals, and unevangelical in its ecclesiastical constitutions!

It should seem, however, notwithstanding the growing immorality of the age, and the other alarming symptoms of our nation, that the Governor among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants upon earth, hath still a favour to England. He is loath to give us up; hitherto assuredly the Lord hath helped us: he hath poured out a spirit of wrestling prayer upon large numbers of religious people. These are symptoms of the most propitious kind. But, with all these advantages, since God usually works by means; if we should share the fate of other nations, there will be no just reason to complain. The war was inevitable. It was ordained of God for the subversion of the seat of the beast.(2) Remember, that we live in a period when one of God's great and afflictive providential dispensations is coming upon the world; a dispensation predicted for some thousands of years; and every remaining popish, secular, and superstitious circumstance, which is calculated to offend the Majesty of Heaven, and to oppose the interests of Christ's kingdom,(3) should be removed, and nothing should

(2) The Pope and Mohammed rose in or about the same year. The former is driven from his seat exactly at the end of 1260 years. And is it not a circumstance extremely remarkable, that the very same man, in the very same year, should invade the empire of the latter during a state of profound peace, seemingly without any reason? We know the Turk is to fall, and we have some cause to suppose the period of that catastrophe will be at no great distance from the subversion of the Pope's secular dominion. We shall be on the wrong side of the question, if we attempt to support either him or the remaining popish states, and shall suffer for our intermeddling.

(3) What can be more inimical to the interests of the gospel of Christ in the world, than the damnable monopoly of church livings, so extremely common among all the higher orders of the clergy in this country? A certain clerical character is at this time in possession of 700 pounds a year private fortune. He is a tippling immoral person, with little or no family besides his wife. One

be left undone to engage his continued favour and protection.

The Dissenters and Methodists are moving heaven and earth to promote the interests of religion in their several ways, and to oppose the torrent of vice and infidelity, which is overspreading these lands. An association has been formed among some of the clergy at Manchester, to preach a weekly lecture in each others churches ; which will be attended with good effect. This is a laudable effort, and shews a proper attention to the circumstances of the times, and should be followed in all populous towns. We ought every one to step out of the routine of our accustomed methods of doing good, and strive with peculiar energy to save our people's souls from death, and our country from ruin. An association of Protestant Dissenters, of different denominations, has also been formed at Bedford. About thirty ministers in that neighbourhood are already engaged to co-operate in spreading the knowledge of the gospel through all the towns and villages, in that vicinity, upon the most liberal plan. The same kind of associations pervade the whole of the three kingdoms. This is good news to all that wish well to the cause of religion, without regard to sects, parties, and opinions ; and convinces us, that the gospel of Jesus wants nothing but fair play ; and that human establishments, and great worldly emolu-

living he has got, of 600 pounds a year, besides two rectories, one of 500, the other of 350 pounds a year. He has obtained a prebendary of considerable value in one of our cathedrals. Will any man undertake to say, that a clergyman of this description believes the gospel of Christ ? All such characters are infidels in disguise, they do an infinite deal of harm to the interests of religion in the world, and, in a well ordered state of things, would be degraded from their pretended sacred office. Such men may cry out as loudly as they please against Thomas Paine and his deistical brethren—their craft is in danger !—but they themselves are much more to blame, and shall be condemned with ten-fold confusion. Paine is a saint, compared with such fellows.

ments, are not essentially necessary to its support and propagation. The Puritans were frowned upon by the government from the time of the reformation to the days of Charles I. and yet they increased to such a height as to overturn both church and state. The Dissenters have been frowned on again from the revolution to the present time, and yet they, and the Methodists, are much more upon the increase,(4) than we of the establishment, who are fostered by the government, attended by the nobles and gentry of the land, and supported by the state, at the expense of nearly two millions a year. When shall it once be, that the great ones of the world will be capable of seeing, that oppression, of every kind and degree, for conscience' sake, always produces an effect directly contrary to the wishes and intentions of the oppressor?

The villages in England alone, besides cities and market towns, are about 30,000. All these call upon us for every exertion to evangelize them, and to save the people's souls alive.—A branch from the Methodists is spreading itself far and wide, under the direction of Alexander Kilham. At present they have about seventeen circuits, twenty preachers, and upwards of 5000 persons in society, and are increasing

(4) This brings to my mind an anecdote of George Whitefield, in the reign of George II. When a certain bishop was complaining to the king of Whitefield's great and eccentric labours, and advising with him what steps were best to be taken to put a stop to his preaching, his majesty replied, " My lord, I can see no other way but for us to make a bishop of him. This will stand a good chance of stopping his wild career." If this is the recipe for curing a clergyman of an excess of public preaching, the following prescription, given by a valuable author about thirty years ago, would have no little effect in preventing the growth and increase of Methodism.—" Let the clergy live more holily, pray more fervently, preach more heavenly, and labour more diligently, than the Methodist ministers: then will Christians flock to the churches to hear us, as they now flock to the meetings to hear them."

considerably each year. Shall *we* then, *we*, the eighteen thousand clergymen of the establishment, who are under such superior obligations, many of whom are paid by the state, at the rate of some hundreds, and others at the rate of some thousands a year; shall *we* be all asleep, sit still, and pursue no vigorous measures, each one in our own sphere, or various of us in concert, till destruction come upon us to the uttermost? (5) Is not the time nearly arrived for the subversion of the nations? And can any thing under heaven prevent our sharing in the common fate of Christendom, but a speedy and effectual return to evangelical principles and practices? Does not the murderous sword draw nearer and nearer every year? And shall we clergymen, who above all men in the kingdom are devoted to the assured destruction, be indifferent to circumstances? Let the very laudable conduct of the several zealous bodies of Christians in this nation, not excite our rage and envy, but rather let it provoke us to jealousy and emulation. If ever there were a time when it was necessary to awake out of sleep, and to be alive to the interests of the gospel, surely it is now. If our archbishops and bishops are indisposed towards a meliorated state of the ecclesiastical part of the constitution, let them at least lay aside their affectation of pomp and shew, come among their clergy and people, and set us an example of a warm and judicious zeal in preaching—not merely a refined morality—but the great and glorious truths of the everlasting gospel, (6) in such a way as we can all

(5) It is related of John Carlyon, that when his health would not permit him to reside upon the valuable living of Bradwell in Essex, he resolutely gave it up, and would not serve it by a curate, though intreated by the bishop so to do. There was not, however, in this case, that close trial of conscientious integrity, that we have known in some others; because Mr. Carlyon was a person of considerable private fortune.

(6) Newton on the Prophecies, in three volumes, which were published forty or fifty years ago, hath spoken in terms nearly as strong.

understand and feel. This would have a strong tendency to animate and encourage the pious part of the clergy in their ministerial labours for the good of mankind, and to discountenance and overawe the licentious and profane, those dreadful pests of every neighbourhood, which has the misfortune to be cursed with their example.(7) Such a reformation as this, is within the power of every bishop upon the bench, whose age and health will admit of exertion; and no one need wait for the concurrence of his brethren. As matters, however, are now managed, a large proportion both of our bishops and clergy are, in a very considerable degree, an useless burden upon the public. We not only do little or no good, but we do a great deal of harm. While we continue dead to the interests of religion; subscribe what we do not believe; read what we do not approve; and set the pulpit and reading desk at loggerheads one with the other; while our doctrines are unevangelical; our spirit lukewarm; our minds secular, worldly; our studies merely literary, or philosophical; and our conduct immoral; far better would it be the nation were without us, and all our preferments sequestered to the purposes of the state, as they respectively become vacant, and the people left to provide at their own expense for ministers, as is the case among all denominations of dissenters. In this case, ministers in general would be better provided for, the people would.

concerning the danger the country is in because of our national iniquities.

Horne also hath expressed his fears to the same purpose.

(7) Burnet speaks on this subject with great concern. "I say it with great regret, I have observed the clergy in all places through which I have travelled, Papists, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Dissenters; but of them all, our clergy are the most remiss in their labours in private, and the least severe in their lives.— Unless a better spirit possesses the clergy, arguments and what is more, law and authority, will not prove enough to preserve the church."

be better served, the government would obtain considerable sums of money, and all the *dumb dogs*, the useless and immoral part of the clergy, would be sent one to his farm, and another to his merchandize.(8) Can any rational man say, that this would be a misfortune to the nation? Were I in the prime minister's place, and wanted to raise money, I should certainly turn my attention to the property of the church.—What need is there that a bishop should enjoy public money to the amount of—from two to twenty thousands a year? Where is the necessity, too, that a private clergyman should hold a living, or livings, to the amount of one, two, or three thousand pounds a year? I protest my sagacity cannot discern either the necessity or propriety of these things.(9) I can truly say I never took more pains in the ministry, than when I had only sixty pounds a year. Since I have been married and had a family, my income from the church has never amounted to an hundred and twenty pounds a year. Notwithstanding this, I have been not only content, but happy. I have laboured hard, studied hard, and, probably, have been as useful, and well satisfied with my condition, as the fattest rec-

(8) South says, that "many a man has run his head against a pulpit, who would have cut an excellent figure at a plough tail."

(9) Montesquieu tells us, that "the prosperity of religion is different from that of civil government." "Religion may be well in an afflicted state, because affliction is the true state of a christian. The humiliations and dispersion of the church, the destruction of her temples, and the persecutions of her martyrs, are the distinguished times of her glory. On the contrary, when she appears triumphant in the eye of the world, she is generally sinking in adversity."

Agreeably to this, Newton, speaking of Constantine's open profession of christianity says, "Though it added much to the temporal prosperity, yet it contributed little to the spiritual graces and virtues of christians. It enlarged their revenues, and increased their endowments; but proved the fatal means of corrupting the doctrine, and relaxing the discipline of the church."

tor in all the diocese of Chester. If any person, in the mean time, had bestowed upon me a living of five hundred or a thousand pounds a year, I should have been under great obligations to such person, but I very much question whether I should have been made a more happy man, or a more useful minister of the gospel.(10) It is much more likely, I should have been very seriously injured, should have composed myself to rest, and cried with the rich fool, " Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."—The clergy with large preferments are, generally speaking, the drones of society. They neither write any thing to good purpose, nor do they take any serious pains in their vocation of preaching the gospel. If they do write, it is usually something foreign to their profession; and if they do sometimes hold forth from the pulpit, it is in such a way, as is calculated to do neither good nor harm. Not being truly in earnest for their own salvation, they have but little zeal for the salvation of others.(1) A reduction of some of our church-livings, an increase of others, with a prohibi-

(10) This brings to my recollection a story of one of the popes of Rome, who seeing a large sum of money laying upon his table, said to one of the cardinals. " The church can no longer say, silver and gold have I none."—" No," answered the other, " nor can the church any longer say, Take up thy bed and walk."

(1) " I choose to speak to what falls under the observation of all serious attentive persons in the kingdom. The superior clergy are, in general ambitious, and eager in the pursuit of riches; flatterers of the great, and subservient to party interest; negligent of their own particular charges, and also of the inferior clergy, and their immediate charges. The inferior clergy imitate their superiors, and, in general, take little more care of their parishes than barely what is necessary to avoid the censure of the law. And the clergy of all ranks, are, in general, either ignorant, or if they do apply, it is rather to profane learning, to philosophical or political matters, than to the study of the Scriptures, of the oriental languages, of the fathers, and ecclesiastical authors,

tion of pluralities, would have some good effect: but, a still better thing for the real interests of religion would be, to grant the use of our churches to the people in the several districts of the country, to sequester all the emoluments to the uses of the state, and to leave the people to provide and pay their own ministers. This would make us look about us. But can any man suppose the gospel of Christ itself would be a sufferer by such a measure?

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II. AFTER what has been said, I do not see how I can, either in honour or conscience, continue to officiate any longer as a minister of the gospel in the establishment of my native country. It appears to me, in my coolest and most considerate moments, to be a main branch of the anti-christian system. It is a strange mixture of what is secular and what is spiritual. And the day is at no very great distance, when the whole fabric shall tumble into ruins, and the pure and immortal religion of the Son of God, rise more bright, lovely, and glorious from its subversion.(2) The several warnings of the sacred oracles seem to be of vast importance, and necessary to be observed: "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul; be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the day of the Lord's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed; forsake her, and let

and of the writings of devout men in different ages of the churches: far the greater part of the clergy of all ranks in this kingdom are of this kind."

(2) We seem to have many and strong symptoms of political decay: for

" States thrive or wither as moons wax and wane,  
Ev'n as God's will and God's decree ordain;  
While honour, virtue, piety bear sway,  
They flourish; and, as these decline, decay."

us go every one unto his own country. When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains.—These are remotely applicable to the business in hand. The following is directly so.—“I heard a voice from heaven, saying, *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*”

In obedience to these injunctions, and under a strong disapprobation of the several anti-christian circumstances of our own established church,(3) *the general doctrines of which I very much approve and admire*, I now withdraw; and renounce a situation, which, in some respects, has been extremely eligible. I cast myself again upon the bosom of a gracious Providence, which has provided for me all my life long. Hitherto, I must say, the Lord hath helped me. I have never wanted any manner of thing that has been necessary to my comfort. And though I neither know what to do, nor whither to go, yet

“The world is all before me, where to choose  
My place of rest, and Providence my guide.”

(3).Paine observes, that “all national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, are no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.”

The Jewish institution ought to have been excepted in this censure. It was unquestionably divine, and was appointed for the most important purposes, and attended with the most indisputable evidence.

Another author, much more capable of judging than Paine hath said, that “National churches are that hay and stubble, which might be removed without difficulty or confusion from the fabric of religion, by the gentle hand of reformation, but which the infatuation of ecclesiastics will leave to be destroyed by fire. National churches are that incrustation, which has enveloped, by gradual concretion, the diamond of christianity; nor can the genuine lustre be restored, but by such violent efforts as the separation of substances so long and closely connected must inevitably require.”

This extraordinary step the sacred dictates of conscience compel me to take. I am truly sorry for it. To me few trials were ever equal. I have loved the people among whom I have so long lived and laboured. And I have every reason to be satisfied with their conduct towards me. Neither hath the great Head of the church left us without seals to our ministry. The appearance of fruit has been large. And there are some among the people of our charge, who will be our joy and crown in the great day of the Redeemer's coming. My friends must consider me as called away by an imperious Providence; and, I trust, they will be provided with a successor more than equal, in every respect, to their late affectionate pastor. I think it necessary to say, that the doctrines which I have preached unto them for six and twenty years, I still consider as the truths of God. I have lived in them myself, and found comfort from them. I have faithfully made them known to others, as thousands can bear me witness; we have seen them effectual to the pulling down the strong holds of sin and Satan, in a variety of cases; and I hope to die in the same faith, and to find them the power of God unto the salvation of my own soul in eternal glory by Christ Jesus. I mean to preach the same doctrines, the Lord being my helper, during the whole remainder of my life, wheresoever my lot may be cast. I am not weary of the work of the sacred ministry. I have, indeed, often been weary in it, but never of it. I pray God my spiritual vigour, life, and love, and usefulness may abound more and more to the end of my Christian warfare.

“ Awake my dormant zeal! for ever flame  
With gen’rous ardours for immortal souls;  
And may my head, and tongue, and heart, and all,  
Spend and be spent in service so divine.”.

“ But, if you had so many objections to the established church, why did you enter into it? Why did

you continue to officiate so long in it? And why did you not decline it long ago?

All my habits, and the prejudices of my education run in favour of the church. My father and friends were in the same habits. All my younger days, I took for granted every thing was right, nor had I any suspicions to the contrary. If I had so seriously considered these things thirty years ago, I should have acted agreeably to my convictions. I recollect, indeed, about that time, to have had my fears that some things among us were not as they should be. I saw with my own eyes, that almost all the clergy, with whom I was acquainted, were practically wrong at least. Between them and the precepts of the gospel there seemed a perfect contrast. My mind was but little informed upon religious subjects. I was distrustful of my own judgment, and thought it prudent to be guided by the judgment of those, of whose piety I had a good opinion. Few young persons think deeply and solidly, and fewer still have reading and experience sufficient to enable them to form an accurate estimate upon such intricate questions. Indeed, most men, in the earlier stages of life, are led by the prejudices of education, and the example of those with whom they converse. There is so much that is excellent in the Articles, Homilies, and common forms of our church, that it cannot be a matter of wonder, if unenlightened and inexperienced young men, who, are either careless about all religion, or whose desires are good, and intentions simple, should comply with what they hear spoken of in terms of high approbation, and see practised every day by their superiors both in age, rank, and learning. The idea too, that we have left the church of Rome because of her delusions, and are members of a reformed and Protestant community, has no little weight with the larger part of the candidates for the sacred ministry.

I am well aware that many of the most serious and useful of my clerical brethren are of an opinion very different from me respecting the established religion of this country. It is not long since a clergyman of this description told me, in a manner extremely emphatical, that "our church is all pure and without spot." (4) I was surprised at the assertion, from a conscientious man; but I have no material objection to any person's enjoying his own sentiments in peace. I claim the same liberty, and desire nothing farther. Earnestly wishing success to the ministerial labours of every good man, whether in the establishment or out of it, and without even condemning or approving one denomination or another, I obey the painful dictates of my own mind. Possibly I am mistaken. If I am so, it is to be lamented, because I prefer my present situation to most others I know in England. If I had been disposed to leave it, I have not been without opportunity. Twenty years ago, the late John Thornton voluntarily offered to procure me a better preferment, if I would accept of it; but I told him, after expressing my gratitude, that Divine Providence seemed to have placed me where I was, and I could not think of quitting my station, merely for the sake of a better living; till the time came that the same Providence should call me away. That time seems to me to be now come; since I can no longer keep my church and retain my honour, in obeying the dictates of conscience. This is the providential call to quit my station, though I never expect to be so happily circumstanced again. I know well what pain such a determination will give my people; but, with all due regard to the feelings of my friends,

(4) This brings to mind a remark that Whiston used frequently to make upon Gibson, "That he seemed to think the church of England, as it just then happened to be, established by modern laws and customs, came down from heaven with the Athanasian creed in its hand."

I must consider, that I am amenable, in the first place, to the great Head of the church for my conduct, and must, on the highest considerations, endeavour to conduct myself agreeably to his pleasure. After a thousand defects, both in my public ministrations and private conduct, I can say, I have done my best to promote as well the temporal as spiritual interests of the town of Macclesfield; and I heartily wish my successor may be more acceptable, more heavenly minded, more laborious, more useful and more successful in winning souls to Christ.

To this, it will be objected, "that I am taking a very disreputable step, and that a vast majority of the men of sense and learning around me are of a different opinion."

I admit every thing that can be said on this score, in the utmost latitude. But a passage or two of our Saviour's discourses is a sufficient support, against all obloquy of this nature. These monopolizers of sense and learning must answer for themselves, and I must give an account unto God for my conduct. I consider myself as a shadow that passeth away. I feel the infirmities of nature coming on, and death stands ready at the door to summon me before the bar of my Redeemer. It is, therefore, of consequence we act now as we shall wish we had acted then. At that trial, no man can be responsible for his brother:—"Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, shall receive an hundred fold now, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.—Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

"Why are you so squeamish in little matters? Why not make yourself easy, and conduct yourself like the rest of your clerical brethren?"

I have long and earnestly endeavoured to quiet my conscience, and to reconcile it to my present situation. I have used every method in my power for this purpose. I have pleaded the example of others, great men, good men, useful men; I have soothed it; I have desisted from reading, thinking, examining; I have pleaded the wishes of my friends, the usefulness of my ministerial labours; the disagreeableness of changing my situation, my forming new connections; the extreme inconvenience of giving up my present income; &c. &c. but after all I can do, conscience follows me from place to place, and thunders in my ear, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?—He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

How would you conduct yourself in such a case? According to the thirty-sixth Canon we are willingly and *ex animo* to subscribe, that the book of Common Prayer, and of ordering of bishops, priests, and deacons, containeth in it nothing contrary to the Scriptures; and that we acknowledge all and every the thirty-nine articles, besides the ratification, to be agreeable to the word of God.(5)

(5) As to Mr. Paley's scheme of subscribing the thirty-nine articles, as articles of peace, it is all sophistry, and such as an honest man should be ashamed to avow. I admire his abilities, but detest his recommending prevarication to the clergy.

Paley is very justly reprehended by Gisborne. "The opinion which Paley maintains appears to me not only unsupported by argument, but likely to be productive of consequences highly pernicious.—That subscription may be justified without an actual belief of each of the articles, as I understand Paley to intimate, is a gratuitous assumption. On this point let the articles speak for

God of my fathers! what a requirement is this?  
Can I lift up my hand to heaven and swear by *Him*

themselves. Why is an article continued in its place, if it be not meant to be believed? If one may be signed without being believed, why not all? By what criterion are we to distinguish those which may be subscribed by a person who thinks them false, from those which may not? Is not the present mode of subscription virtually the same as if each article were separately offered to the subscriber? And in that case could any man be justified in subscribing one which he disbelieved? No circumstance could have a more direct tendency to ensnare the consciences of the clergy; no circumstance could afford the enemies of the established church a more advantageous occasion of charging her ministers with insincerity, than the admission of the opinion, that the articles may safely be subscribed without a conviction of their truth, taken severally, as well as collectively. That opinion I have seen maintained in publications of inferior note, but I could not without particular surprise and concern, behold it avowed by a writer of such authority as Paley."

Before the reader condemns the author of this Plea for Religion, because of his leaving the church, and the various reflections he has made upon the bishops and clergy, he requests that Burnet's Conclusion of the History of his Own Times, may be thoroughly read and considered. The bishops and clergy of the land should be extremely familiar both with that, and his Pastoral Care. *It is high time to wake out of sleep.*

The number of persons, who declined officiating in the church of England, upon the conditions required, in the last century, was upwards of two thousand. Milton was brought up and sent to the university with a view to the church, but when he came seriously to consider the conditions upon which he must enter, he declined the sacred office. "To the church by the intentions of my parents and friends, I was destined of a child, and in mine own resolutions till coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe, slave, and take an oath withal; which unless he took with a conscience that would stretch, he must either strain, perjure, or split his faith; I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing."

There have been some respectable persons in our own day, who have declined entering into the church of England from objections entertained to our oaths and subscriptions; others have complied with all our forms and ceremonies, but have been obliged to strain and shuffle, and have never known what peace of mind and a good conscience afterwards meant; and others have been so

*that liveth for ever and ever, that I do willingly and ex animo subscribe as is legally required?* And can any man living thus subscribe, who has thoroughly considered the subject? We must shuffle and prevaricate in some things, say and do what we will. I myself strongly approve the general strain of the doctrines of our church; but then here is no choice. It must be *willingly* and *ex animo*, *all* and *every* thing! There is no medium.

And can I, among other things which are to be subscribed, believe from my soul, before the Searcher of hearts, who requireth truth in the inward parts, and in the face of the whole christian world declare, that, “whosoever doth not hold the Catholic faith”—as explained in the Athanasian creed—“and keep it whole and undefiled, shall, *without doubt, perish everlasting*ly?”—This proposition we are enjoined, not only to believe ourselves, but to affirm that we do *willingly* and *ex animo* subscribe to it, as being agreeable to the word of God; and then we must openly profess our faith in it *fourteen times* every year. I am not unacquainted that various manœuvres are made use of to render these harsh expressions palatable; but all illustrations and modifications of these sentences appear to me illusive. Burnet has said all that can be said upon them, but, to very little purpose. Honestly, therefore, did Tillotson declare to him, “The account given of Athanasius’s creed seems to me no wise satisfactory. I wish we were well rid of it.”—And so do I, for the credit of our common Christianity. It has been a mill-stone about the neck of many thousand worthy men. Declarations like these descended out of the

pressed and wounded in their minds, that they have given up their situations, after they have been already ordained. Blackburne was never at rest in his spirit; Tucker gives up several things among us as wrong; Robertson, Dyer, Evanson, and Wakefield all resigned their letters of orders; and have ceased to officiate as ministers in the establishment.

bottomless pit, to disgrace the subscribing clergy, to render ridiculous the doctrines of the gospel, to impel the world into infidelity, and to damn the souls of those, who, for the sake of filthy lucre, set their hands to what they do not honestly believe. Though I believe the doctrine of the Trinity as revealed in the Scripture, yet I am not prepared, openly and explicitly, to send to the devil, under my solemn subscription, every one who cannot embrace the Athanasian illustration of it. In this thing the Lord pardon his servant for subscribing in time past. I will do so no more. Those that can do it are extremely welcome to the best bishoprics and livings in the kingdom. I should like to retain what I have already gotten, but not upon the conditions required. As an honest man, and a man under expectations of salvation, I must renounce my present situation, and the little emoluments which arise from—it. There is no other alternative.(6)

“But you are acting a part extremely imprudent, on account of your family.”

But I am obeying the dictates of conscience, and the commands of God. And it is written:—“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations,

(6) I have for some years made myself tolerably easy under the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed, by omitting to read it at the times appointed. But, to an upright mind, this is not satisfactory; because we solemnly declare and subscribe, that we will conform to the liturgy of the church of England as by law established. Now every time we omit to read the said creed, or any other parts of the service of the church, we are guilty of a breach of engagement. So that whether we read the creed in question, or neglect to read it, we are culpable, if we do not *ex animo* approve of it.

whose builder and maker is God. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter ; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt ; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (7)

" You are already in the church, and have got over the business of subscription. You may continue, therefore, in your present situation without being called upon to repeat the same painful ceremony."

I have many years been determined never to subscribe agreeably to the requirements of the 36th Canon, whatever offers of preferment might be made me. But, when I reflect seriously and closely upon the subject, this does not satisfy me. I cannot help considering my holding a church, and complying with all its rites and ceremonies, as a silent acquiescence in, and a tacit approbation of, all the unevangelical traits of the church of England.—While such is my situation; I certainly constitute a part of the grand system of the anti-christian apostacy, which, as I understand the prophetic Scriptures, is to undergo a total subversion.

" You are quitting a situation of uncommon usefulness."

(7) I do not recollect reading or hearing any instance so like unto this of Moses as that of the Marquis of Vico, who died A. D. 1592, at the age of 74. When he was come to years, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, he refused to be called the son and heir to a marquis, a cup-bearer to an emperor, nephew to a pope, and chose rather to suffer affliction, persecution, banishment, loss of lands, livings, wife, children, honours, and preferments, than to enjoy the sinful pleasures of Italy for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the honours of the most brilliant connexions, and all the enjoyments of the most ample fortune ; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

With my views, however, I cannot honourably and safely do otherwise. I believe, and fear, and tremble at the word of the Most High. Besides, God can do as well without my labours as with them. And if he should think proper, by this step, to cast me quite aside, as a broken vessel no longer of use, I will endeavour to acquiesce in the Divine determination.

“ God doth not need  
 Either man's work or his own gifts ; who best  
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best ; his state  
 Is kingly ; thousands at his bidding speed  
 And post over land and ocean without rest :  
 They also serve, who only stand and wait.”

If the Church of England retains much of the spirit, and some of the superstitions of the Church of Rome,(8) what is a conscientious man to do, and how is he to act, under such a persuasion? Let any person weigh thoroughly the meaning of the following declarations, and then let him say in what manner I ought to act :—“ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb ; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever : and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”(9)

(8) The late lord Chatham, in a speech which he made in the house of lords in favour of the Dissenters, said. “ We have a Popish liturgy, a Calvinistic creed, and an Arminian clergy.”

(9) Doddridge observes on this paragraph of Scripture, “ When I seriously reflect on this text, and how directly the force of it lies against those, who, contrary to the light of their consciences,

Are not these words enough to make the hair “stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine?” We all read them, and have read them many times for many years; and yet, from our general conduct, one would suppose no such passage might be found in the Sacred Writings. We protestants are almost universally of opinion, that they apply directly to the members of the church of Rome. The members of that church read them as well as we Protestants, and yet we hardly ever hear of a Catholic becoming a Protestant, any more than of a Jew becoming a Christian. *They have eyes, and see not; ears, and hear not; hearts, and understand not.* The Lord, in judgment, *hath sent them strong delusion that they should believe a lie.* The words are extremely plain, and inexpressibly alarming: but the force of them are always evaded, by applying them to *any thing*, rather than to their own church.—We Protestants too read them, and make ourselves easy under the awful denunciation, by applying them *exclusively* to the church of Rome: never dreaming that they are equally applicable, not only to the *English* but to every *church establishment* in Christendom, which retains any of the marks of the Beast. My judgment has not been biased by interest, by connections, by inclination, or by any human considerations whatever. I have thought much upon the subject: read on both sides of the question whatever has fallen in my way; conversed with various persons for the sake of information; suf-

continue in the communion of the church of Rome, for secular advantage, or to avoid the terror of persecution, it almost makes me tremble; and I heartily wish, that all others, who connive at those things in the discipline and worship of Protestant churches, which they in their consciences think to be sinful remains of Popish superstition and corruption, would seriously attend to this passage, which is one of the most dreadful in the whole book of God, and weigh its awful contents, that they may keep at the greatest possible distance from this horrible curse, which is sufficient to *make the ears of every one that bears it to tingle.*”

ferred the matter to rest upon my mind for some years undetermined ; have never made my fears, suspicions, and dissatisfaction known to any man ; and now, when I bring near to myself the thought of quitting one of the most commodious churches in the kingdom, erected on purpose for my own ministrations ; leaving interred by it many a precious deposit, who will, I trust, be *my joy and crown* in the great day of the Lord Jesus, besides a *mother*, a *wife*, two *children*, and a *sister* ; and giving up various *kind friends*, whom I love as my own soul, together with a large body of people, that, " if it were possible, would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to me."—What shall I say?—All that is affectionate within me recoils. I am torn with conflicting passions ; and am ready to say with the apostle, " I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my friends and brethren, whom I love in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

But various passages of Scripture urge me, on the most momentous considerations, to renounce a situation, which I cannot any longer retain with peace of mind. I bewail it exceedingly. I have received no affront; conceived no disgust; formed no plans; made no connections; consulted no friends; experience no weariness of the ministerial office; the ways of religion are still pleasant; I have been glad when duty called me to the house of God; his word hath been delightful; the pulpit has been awfully pleasing; the table of the Lord hath been the joy of my heart; and now that Providence calleth me away, with some degree of reluctance it is that I say, Lord, here I am. Do with me what seemeth thee good.—Let me stay where I am. I gladly stay. Send me where thou wilt. I will endeavour to submit. Only go with me, and thy pleasure shall be mine.

" I argue not  
Against heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot  
Of heart or hope; but still bear up, and steer  
Right onward."

END OF THE PLEA.

h h



SKETCH  
OF THE  
LIFE, DEATH, AND CHARACTER  
OF  
DAVID SIMPSON.

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**BIOGRAPHY**, more than any other kind of historical information, is generally sought after, and read with avidity.—When an author once engages our attention, we are commonly desirous to be informed of his life and manners; and the most trivial occurrences seem interesting when sanctioned with a great name or superior ability.—From these considerations, it has been contemplated to present the friends of the Rev. David Simpson, with some account of his character, seeing he has so universally prepossessed his readers with admiration of his skill and erudition in handling sacred things.—But the writer of this, being disappointed in the expected reception of materials for the design, is extremely grieved that a more complete or systematic narrative is not presented, by some abler pen, with ability and leisure to delineate the character of this great man. This, however, not being the case, a chasm in the chain of intelligence will necessarily ensue. Indeed, little is yet known of

the earlier career of his life, birth, or education, till his settlement.

Born of poor parents, he obtained his collegiate acquirements, through the instrumentality of friends. Having habits of persevering industry, and exemplary piety, from his youth, he eagerly grasped after information, and gradually obtained notice.

He was instructed in the rites of the established church, to which his father and friends strictly adhered. He had serious impressions when very young, was an observer of all moral duties, an attendant on church and sacrament, and one who said many prayers. But was lacking in vital religion till he attained his twenty-second year, when it pleased the Lord to throw conviction to his heart, that he had never till then been a Christian, in its proper import. He could then feelingly say, what he had before repeated in words only : "the remembrance of my sins is grievous unto me ; the burden of them is intolerable." He mourned, he wept, and prayed. One day, being in prayer, he had such a view of his past sinfulness and present guilt and pollution, as almost deprived him of hope. But the Lord suddenly removed his burden, and whispered peace and pardon to his soul. He felt his sins were all forgiven. He renounced the pomps and vanities of the world, and from that period to his death, was an ensample of piety, truth, and holiness.

In these, his earlier years, he frequently went to the neighbouring highlands, in Wales, which borders on the county of Cheshire, and preached to their unenlightened inhabitants. Many who received their first religious impressions at those times, became afterwards members of the Methodist society. Useful as he has been, there can be no doubt but he would have been much more so, had he continued those labours. He has often been heard to say, "They were the happiest days of his life." But a violent pain in the head, with which he was more frequently attacked

some years before he died, greatly discouraged him.

In the year 1773, and in the 28th year of his age he obtained the place of curate in Christ church Macclesfield. Here he officiated with uncommon satisfaction for some time. The rector preached in the morning, and the curate held forth in the afternoon the custom being for the one who did not preach to read prayers.—It was always observed that by far the largest auditory attended Mr. Simpson's sermons which were constantly delivered with a divine pathos in earnest desire to persuade his hearers into love and desire to the ways of godliness, and warn them of the world's delusion.—His zeal was warm, and he could not but observe with regret, the cold and formal manner in which his superior brother delivered his moral lessons, instead of the living and vivifying words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From regret, at this repeated prostitution of the sacred function, disgust ensued, and this provoked resentment. When an event occurred, which at once ended his curateship, and, by good and unexpected providence, opened a door for his permanent and extensive usefulness.

Prompted by a reiteration of the poor and flimsy method of moral harangue, instead of proclaiming gospel liberty to captive souls, he embraced the resolution, publicly to expose the abuse. Accordingly having ascended his afternoon station as usual, he took for his text the identical words that were spoken from by the rector in the morning. He had not proceeded long, as the circumstance is related, before the reverend rector, perceiving his drift, deserted his seat, mounted the pulpit, and, forgetting all decorum to time and place, collared Mr. Simpson.—This naturally caused confusion. The church was in an uproar, and while sides were forming, Mr. Charles Roe, esq. stood up and proclaimed aloud, that he

should befriend Mr. Simpson, and if he was denied that church, he would build him one himself. Which he accordingly did. A large and magnificent structure was erected, at his sole expense. A rich lady in the neighbourhood, who also was a warm friend to Mr. Simpson, and who desired to evince her regard, pleaded with Mr. Roe to accept her quota in the expense of the edifice. He refused it. She then desired that the bells might be furnished by her boon. This also he denied, and placed eight bells, with every else thing, at his own particular cost. This minute mention is given in honour to the memory of his patron, as a rare instance of benevolence. Some evil tongues did not omit to spread a report that Mr. Roe was not so generous as might be conceived, as he proposed all this profusion of munificence as a comfortable birth for his son, who had about this time entered Oxford college, and intended Mr. Simpson as recumbent in the mean time. This conjecture he defeated immediately on the completion of the church, when he gave Mr. Simpson a deed for life.

Thus was our author settled in an unforeseen and happy manner, with full scope for his usefulness. The house was erected in fee simple, on freehold property, by which manœuvre, the bishops had no access to lord it over him. He continued to preach in it, to very large congregations, till a few weeks before his decease.

Nevertheless, all this sunshine was not without a cloud. He endured much persecution, and his trials were sore and heavy. His opposers were many, and he was obliged to labour in the fire a long time. A few passages from the experience of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers, niece to Mr. Roe, will serve as a specimen of the unfavourable opinion entertained of him by his enemies generally.

“ In the summer of 1773, when at Adlington, I heard various accounts of a clergyman whom my uncle

Roe had recommended to be curate at Macclesfield, and who was said to be a Methodist. This conveyed to my mind as unpleasing an idea of him as if he had been called a Romish priest; being fully persuaded that to be a Methodist was to be all that is vile under the mask of piety. I believed their teachers were the false prophets spoken of in Scripture ; that they deceived the illiterate, and were little better than common pickpockets ; that they filled some of their hearers with presumption, and drove others to despair ; that they had dark meetings, and pretended to cast out devils ; with many other things, equally false and absurd, but all of which I believed : I heard also that this new clergyman preached against all my favourite diversions, such as going to plays, reading novels, attending balls, assemblies, card tables, &c. But I resolved he should not make a convert of *me* ; and that if I found him such as was represented, I would not go often to hear him.

“ When I returned to Macclesfield, the whole town was in an alarm. My uncle Roe and my cousins seemed very fond of Mr. Simpson, and told me he was a most excellent man ; but all the rest of my relations were exasperated against him.”

However, he lived to see these seeds of strife and party, which had so unfortunately prevailed, and shot forth their bitter weeds from his first settlement in Macclesfield, gradually wither and die away before the potent flame of Christian love and forbearance. Even Mrs. Rogers had cause afterwards to bless his ministry, which had been instrumental to her conversion. As he respected all whom he thought to be sincere in their professions, without attention to names and sects : so he was, in his turn, beloved by all denominations of Christians. Even those who could not subscribe to his creed as a divine, were forced to venerate his character as a man. So general was the respect, and so prevalent the solicitude

for his health and welfare, that in his last sickness, public prayers were offered up in his behalf, not only at his own church, but among the Dissenters and Methodists, and even at that very church from which he had been driven in the violent manner already narrated.—So that at length he could apply these lines:

“ To earth born pain superior you shall rise,  
Thro’ the wide waves of unopposing skies;  
When summon’d hence ascend heav’n’s high abode,  
Converse with angels, and rejoice with God.”

And also:

“ I stand and admire thy outstretched arm:  
Having walk’d thro’ the fire and suffer’d no harm!”

Concord and harmony being again restored, his ministry was diligently attended and much blessed. Many sinners were awakened, who became serious Christians, and who adorn the gospel at this day: besides many others who died happy in the Lord, have gone before, and welcomed his arrival in the Father’s kingdom.

But there is nothing stationary in this world: no blessing without its concomitant adversity.—In the spring of 1781, six years after his settlement, Mr. Simpson sustained an irreparable loss in the death of his beloved patron, Charles Roe. He died, after a short illness, on the 3d of May. The day before his departure he was reconciled to all his children, with whom there was some little altercation, and called much upon God. He begged Mr. Simpson and others to pray for him; and though scarce able, got upon his knees in bed, to pray for himself. That night he lay composed. At ten next morning, he suddenly opened his eyes, and fixed them on some object for several minutes, with seeming delight. Soon after he silently breathed away his immortal spirit, no doubt, to endless life. On the eighth his remains were carried, by his own carriage and horses, in great

pomp to the New Church, accompanied by coaches, torches, and a vast concourse of people. Mr. Simpson interred him in a new vault he had but lately prepared for himself. Thus died this great, rich, useful, and good man! It brings to mind the beautiful lines of Dr. Young:

" An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave;  
Legions of angels can't confine me there!"

While Mr. Simpson was indefatigable in his pastoral charge, where he has profited hundreds, he was usefully employed in instructing thousands from the press. He wrote much; and his various publications were all designed to promote the cause of religion. His greatest and largest performance is his Sacred Literature, in four volumes. The Key to the Prophecies has been justly admired. He wrote a work, stiled Religious Characters. Finding the theatre to be pernicious in its influence, he put out a pamphlet on the Use and Abuse of the Stage: and such is the reported efficacy of those strictures, that it had almost overturned theatrical representations in Macclesfield for that winter.—He also put out a book against Priestley's Essay on Fatalism. This had been attacked with some applause, by Joseph Benson, an itinerant preacher, and one well versant in Greek and Hebrew lore, being sometime head master of Tiverton college in Wales. Benson was one year stationed in Birmingham, where Priestley resided; at which time they frequently went to hear one another preach. Benson's book becoming popular, Priestley was interrogated why he did not answer it. He gave for reply, that he would not contend with a layman. Simpson, it is said, hearing this, took it in hand, and challenged him to write with a clergyman.—But of all his works, none has experienced so rapid a demand as the Plea for Religion, issued in 1797, with which we are more intimately acquainted. Two edi-

tions were printed in his life time, and two since his death, in London. Three more have since been published in America.

In the second edition of his Plea, printed in 1799, he subjoined, among other matter, the Appendices, wherein he declared his determination to have relinquished his charge in the established church, for which he gave his reasons at length.

“ Yet Providence, that ever-waking eye,  
Looks down with pity on the feeble toil  
Of mortals lost to hope, and lights them safe  
Thro’ all this dreary labyrinth of fate.”

And so it proved with him. Shortly after this determination he was summoned from this world; to one where there is no imperfection, no wrong, no flaw.

All his writings bear much the same character. They are all enriched with numerous notes, anecdotal, profitable, and amusing. Many extracts from the most celebrated poets are interspersed; rightly imagining,

“ A verse may catch him whom a sermon flies,  
And turn delight into a sacrifice.”

Few men in England had more extensive information than Mr. Simpson. His large library contained many useful books of ancient and modern literature. He was a man whose rare talents, both as a preacher and writer, were powerfully enforced by the convincing eloquence of an upright life; a life which was a practical illustration of the doctrines he taught.

He visited and relieved the sick with exemplary diligence. He encouraged, as far as his ability extended, every charitable design; and was at once the *oracle*, the *friend*, the *physician*, and the *patron* of the poor. When he was clearly persuaded that any thing was proper to be done, he hesitated not: No probable inconvenience prevented, no dangers retarded, no per-

secutions withheld, no worldly considerations could move him from following where he conceived his duty led. In fine, as a clergyman, he may be held up for the imitation of his brethren, in every respect.

The pastoral duties of his office were performed with zeal and exactness. The sick and the poor had his peculiar attention; and his great influence was always employed to their advantage. Were they afflicted?—He visited them. Were they in want?—He relieved them. Was there a difference between any of them?—His arbitration settled it. One hour every day, Saturday and Sunday excepted, his study door was thrown open, when the diseased, the needy, the disconsolate, and the oppressed, crowded in to receive relief from him; and to their great felicity, were dismissed with the oil and the wine poured into their wounds.

He preached with the zeal and faithfulness of an apostle; and during the course of his ministry, he discovered, on every occasion, how much his soul was devoted to promote the good of his fellow-creatures. Whatever respected their happiness; whatever related to the melioration of their condition; whatever contributed to their prosperity; or advanced their temporal and spiritual interests, but especially the latter, were the subjects to which he devoted his time, his talents, his money, his influence. But it were endless to trace all the means which his benevolent mind devised to accomplish his purposes:

“ And as a bird each fond endearment tries  
To tempt its new fledg’d offspring to the skies,  
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,  
Allur’d to brighter worlds, and led the way!  
Truth from his lips prevail’d with double sway;  
And fools, who came to scoff, remain’d to pray.”

Such are a few of the traits in the character of Mr. Simpson. It might well be said of him, that he was a pattern in life and deportment of the doctrines he

taught. Literary and social, he was conversant with the greatest scholars of his time. To poor preachers he was peculiarly kind in affording assistance, counsel, and direction. He was on the strictest intimacy with Mr. Wesley, whom he ever regarded as his dear friend.

We shall now view him on a sick and dying bed, where we will find him the same Christian as in health, devoted to his God and Redeemer, and full of the hope of a blissful immortality.—The relation is written by Mr. Reece, to whom also we are indebted for some other elucidations of his character. We shall give the account in his own words.

“ I became acquainted with him in August 1797, when he had the appearance of vigorous health ; and frequently from the pulpit heard him announce the *word of reconciliation*, to perishing sinners, with a warmth of zeal and plainness of language, I had never, till then, heard in the church. But though he had the flush of health, I soon found that his ardent labours had greatly impaired his constitution ; and that after the toils of the sabbath he was frequently unwell for a day or two. Notwithstanding, at those times he had always some publication in hand, calculated to serve mankind. His Sunday exercises were not often interrupted till February 1799, when he was taken ill, and complained of an hectic cough, accompanied with a slow fever. A few days before this, Mrs. Simpson was confined to her room. She had laboured under an indisposition for some months, supposed to proceed from the fatigue of long and unremitting attention to her only daughter, who died the preceding June. Medicine and change of air were tried without effect. She gradually became worse and worse, till she was unable to move out, and then her dissolution was speedy.

“ At this time his situation was affecting in the extreme. Poor Mrs. Simpson lay in a hopeless condi-

tion in the next room, whilst he was unable to afford her the last consolation of his company and prayers. He had, however, the satisfaction of hearing, that as she approached her last hour, her confidence in God increased; and finally, that she closed an useful and exemplary life, rejoicing in the God of her salvation. At this painful juncture he felt acutely; but his expressions were such as evinced the most perfect resignation to the will of God. The religion which he had for so many years experienced, and successfully propagated, was his support. He said, "All is well: all shall be well; and it is right, and just: I have every reason to praise him."

The first time I saw him after he had taken his bed, I found him calm and happy; though he discovered an anxiety for Mrs. Simpson, whom he could not then see. "God," said he, "is going to close up the scene at once, and end our lives and labours together. It is an awful Providence; but it is His will, and I have no desire to return again to health."

On Saturday, the 16th of March, Mr. Lee, who had married his daughter, asked him, How he was? He replied, "Very poorly." On Mr. Lee expressing a hope that he would get better, he said, "No: I shall never get better for this life. I do not wish to live. I have no desire to come back to life. My work is done. I leave the great scene of things now passing in the world to you. Why should I wish to live?" Mr. Lee read to him that hymn which has so often brought comfort to the afflicted:

" Jesu, lover of my soul  
Let me to thy bosom fly," &c.

when he appeared much affected with the following stanza:

" Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on thee;  
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,  
Still support and comfort me!

I i

All my hope on thee is stay'd,  
 All my help from thee I bring;  
 Cover my defenceless head  
 With the shadow of thy wing."

And said, "That is true of me." Feeling his extreme weakness, he said, "What a poor creature I am!" And shortly after repeated, with peculiar emphasis, the following favourite verse:

"Give me a place at thy saints' feet,  
 Or some fall'n angel's vacant seat;  
 I'll strive to sing as loud as they,  
 Who sit above in brighter day."

His fever now increased, and his recovery became very doubtful. Every one, but himself, was extremely anxious for his life. Prayer meetings were appointed, and numerously attended:—the interposition of heaven was sought;—many strong cries and tears were offered up:—the supplication of the flock could not prevail for the recovery of the pastor. But the enemy which every one else dreaded, he welcomed. And while a painful anxiety spread a deep gloom over every countenance, he expressed a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.

One day after a severe fit of coughing, he said to the man who attended him, "The way seems hard, but it is the way the children of God all go; and I do not wish to be exempted from it. I know that my Redeemer liveth; I feel him precious to my soul: He supports me under all. O that I could express all I feel!" The doctor coming in soon after, asked him, How he was? He replied, "Partly here, and partly elsewhere."

A night or two before his death he was very restless, and often imagined himself to be preaching to his old flock. He spoke much of the glories of heaven, and the happiness of separate spirits; of their robes of righteousness, and of their palms of victory. Then breathing his ardent wishes for the happiness of those

present, he added, "Pardon, peace, and everlasting salvation are desirable things."

Sometimes he would address his brethren the clergy, whom he awfully warned to beware, lest they were found unfaithful stewards at the coming of their Great Master. "Men and brethren," he would say, "If you are called of God,—are faithful and honest, he will bless your labours!"—But he could not long proceed in a connected strain.

He had asked Mr. Reece, nine days before, "When is Lady Day?" He told him, Monday, the 25th.—Mr. Simpson replied, "I shall be gone before then." Which was accordingly true; for after a day of apparent suffering on Saturday, he fell asleep a little before midnight, March 24th, 1799.

Thus after an active and laborious ministry of twenty-six years in Macclesfield, he finished his course, and went to his reward.

He was interred on Tuesday morning, March 26th, amidst the sighs and groans, and tears, of an immense multitude of people, who attended him to the grave, like children bereft of their earthly support. In the church, which it is supposed contained near three thousand people, expressions of grief were depicted in the countenances of both old and young; even children joined in the general mourning. The scene was very impressive, and there seemed to be but one prevailing sentiment in every breast. Could its accents have been heard, they would have been something like

"He was a man, take him for all in all,  
I ne'er shall look upon his like again."

The following epitaph for Mr. Simpson, was originally designed for a pane of glass:

Others employ their sculptured marble,  
Or the speaking bronze,  
To perpetuate the remembrance of merit ;  
Whilst I commit to brittle glass,  
This Testimony

To worth not often equalled.  
In the estimation of thousands,

**THE REV. DAVID SIMPSON, A. M.**

For extent of erudition,  
Indefatigable diligence,  
Ardent zeal, and amenity of manners,  
Stood unrivalled.

His pastoral labours, for twenty-six years,  
Were uncommonly successful,  
In the town and neighbourhood  
Of MACCLESFIELD.

Many, whom he found brutes,  
He left Christians.  
His pious care, like that of his

**GREAT MASTER,**

Extended to the Bodies of the Poor of his Flock ;  
The abodes of hopeless anguish he sought out,  
And to administer medicine  
For the relief of affliction,

Was his uniform practice for many years.  
After having devoted

Every talent

With which he was entrusted,  
To the benefit of mankind,  
This bright Star

Was removed from the hemisphere of the church,  
To adorn the Firmament above  
The 24th of March, 1799,  
In the Fifty-fourth year of his age.

# INDEX.

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## A

	Page.
<b>ADDISON</b> , quotations from	25
account from, of an infidel in France	33
pleasing death of,	70
prefers the psalms to Pindar and Horace	276
<b>Adolphus</b> , Gustavus, spent much time in prayer	73
<b>Adrian</b> , address of, to his soul at death	296
<b>Africa</b> , inhabitants of	286
<b>Aiken's</b> account of the Methodists	93
<b>Alexander</b> , conversion of	87
<b>Alfred</b> , diligence and devotion of	61—73
<b>Allix</b> , reflections of, on Scripture, recommended	314
<b>Alphonsus</b> read the Bible fourteen times	308
<b>Altamont</b> , affecting death of	39
<b>America</b> , example of, on religious liberty	168
inhabitants of	286
<b>Anatomy</b> , sketch of	335
<b>Animals</b> , amphibious, species of	335
<b>Anonymous</b> gentleman, affecting death of	41—42
deist, conversion of	55
gentleman's wickedness; conversion, and	56
death	43—44
<b>Antitheus</b> , unhappy death of	203
<b>Antiphates</b> , on a future state	157
<b>Apostacy</b> , antichristian	93
<b>Archdeacons</b> , number of	121
<b>Arguments</b> for the truth of Scripture	217
<b>Ark</b> , Noah's account of	86
<b>Asia</b> , inhabitants of	342
<b>Association</b> at Manchester	342
<b>Association</b> of dissenting ministers	203
<b>Atheism</b> , books against	290
<b>Atheists</b> have appeared in every age	120
<b>Atheist</b> , death of an	330
<b>Augustine</b> possessed a devout spirit	337
<b>Authors</b> , ascetic; devout but superstitions	112

	Page.
Authors, royal and noble, since the conquest	381
Aylmer on the character of women	309

## B

Babylon, prophecies concerning, conclusive	125
Bacon, thoughts of, on deism	84
— some account of	85
— declaration of, on the gospel	240
Bankrupts seldom afterwards pay their creditors	339
Baptism, office of, an hardship on the clergy	181
Barnes read his Bible 120 times	307
Bartholin awakened to see God	283
Barnard eminent for devotion	20
Bath, earl of, devoted his leisure to prayer and the Bible	256
Beauties of Scripture, where found	271
Beattie on the causes of infidelity	314
— quotation from	314
Bedell, death of	78
Beings, human, number of	335
Belisarius began the 1260 prophetic years	186—196
Bernard, hymn of, on the name of Jesus	330
Beza intimately acquainted with the Bible	307
Bible co-existent with time	197
— confirmed by all other books and discoveries	209
— danger of rejecting it	284
— account of one who burnt and another who roasted it	290
— a chief means of the present learning and liberty	126
— read with various views	274
— abounds with all kinds of beauties	274
— should be read in classical schools for its beauties	274
— one grand epic	275
— alone free from human weaknesses	332
— exhortation to the reading of	285
— how to read with profit	286
— books of, how classed as compositions	275
Birds, species of	335
Bishops, conduct of, a main cause of infidelity	91
— income of	91
— without secular dominion in the first ages	97
— frequently hold incompatible preferments	97
— should come among their clergy	98
— Irish, number and income of	98
— and clergy of Europe, a main cause of its misery	98
— duty of	99
— some of the, worthy characters	102
— a useless burden	345

	Page.
Bishops generally oppose zealous clergymen	345
——— should preach boldly and faithfully	345
——— conduct of, cause of the increase of Dissenters	103
——— names of, very pompous	172
Blackmore, opinion of, on the Bible	278
Boerhaave, eminent for devotion	20
Boileau, a great admirer of the Bible	250
Bolingbroke speaks favourably of the gospel	22
——— egregiously mistaken	312
——— an immoral man	82
——— died a deist	283
Bonnet, on the facts of the New Testament	217
Bonnell, made the Scriptures his daily study	308
Books in favour of the Jewish and Christian religions	122
——— to promote the spirit of religion recommended	300
——— number of, published in Germany	334
Bounty, Queen Ann's, obtained by Burnet	92
Boyle, entertained an awful sense of God	205
——— a great lover of the Bible	250
——— on the unreasonableness of deists	250
Brandt, conversion of, from infidelity	59
Briefs, church, some account of	176
Brown, a firm believer	249
——— Thomas, lived laughing, but died groaning	261
Bruno, burn'd for an atheist	273
Bryant, quotation from	7
Bucer wished for farther reformation	166
Buckingham, reproved by Waller	260
——— pathetic letter from	64
Burnet, great diligence of	107
——— opinion of, concerning the clergy	110
——— attempted a reformation	167
——— considered subscription as an imposition	175
——— on pluralities	244
——— on the corruption of our clergy	244
——— on the Athanasian creed	355
——— dying declaration of	248

## C

Calvin a persecutor	242
Canons, oath of, obedience to the, extremely wrong	175
——— no bishop in England complies with the whole	183
Capel, eminent for devotion	20
Carlyon, resignation of	344
Cathedrals, income of	93
Charles II. a persecutor	167

	Page.
Chatham considered the liturgy as popish	349
Chesterfield, sickness and death of	35
letters of	36
two anecdotes concerning	38
convinced by the present state of the Jews	129
China, population of	167
Children presented to church livings	173
Chillingworth, declaration of, on the Bible	251
on subscription to the 39 articles	162
Christ, why not sent sooner	220
prophecies concerning	126
kingdom of, extremely glorious	163
Christianity admits no establishment	218
mysteries of, no objection to it	219
Christians, corruption of, owing to the clergy	95
knavery of, no objection to Christianity	115
animosities of, cause of infidelity	113
number of, in the world	287
Church of Christ incapable of a temporal head	167
of England, income of	92
preferments by money or interest	183
objections to	180
Church livings, monopoly of, a curse to the country	339
wardens, generally perjured	181
Cicero, quotations from	218
Claude, edifying death of	74
Clark on Christianity recommended	266
the incarnation	129
Clergy, of the establishment, in England	91
immoral, do much harm	198
income of	92
an eighteenth part of the, enjoy all the best preferments	94
superior, extremely to blame	94, 246
the 18,000 might do wonders	339
negligence of the, cause of the increase of dissenters	103
misconduct of	111
the most pious called Methodists	245
as a body, excellently learned	246
reproof of	112
Clergy and people of Ireland in a low state	98
horribly cruel under Lewis XIV.	263
Cobold's essay on the historic form of Scripture	210
Colchester, conversion of	54
Collins, choice companion of	278
Comets, number of, discovered	330

	Page.
Conscience, power of	282
Cooke's account of a deist	281
Corruption general, of the country	160
Corporation act	176
Cotes, character of	104
Cowley, opinion of, on the Bible	278
Cranmer on Prebendaries	165
— wished for further reformation	166
— a persecutor	242
Cowper, quotations from	11, 32, 82, 97, 177, 190, 191
Creed, Athanasian, some thoughts on	356—357
Cromwell could repeat the New Testament	307
Curates, frequently guilty of non-residence	172

## D

Dacier, on the Psalms and Prophets	277
D'Alembert died ill	32
Daniel's prophetic dream illustrated	150
— vision	153
Davies, quotation from	350
David, vindicated	212
Daubeny's Guide to the Church censured	169
Death-beds most edifying scenes	323
Death, triumphant, desirable	324
Deans, number of	93
Deists, several, speak well of the gospel	22
— mostly immoral	314
— most believe in a future state	259
— folly of	260
— nothing can justify, but demonstration	261
— appeal to, on the Scripture characters	290
— remonstrance with	266, 283, 289, 297, 304, 313
— ungrateful	267
— address to	285, 286, 289
— many, earthly, sensual, devilish	280
— if sincere, ought to appoint missions	289
— a conscientious, preferable to a secular priest	94
— curious confession of a	281
— shocking death of a	264
Derry—bishop of, an unpardonable non-resident	98.
Devil, proofs of the existence of	202
Diderot died meanly	32
Dillon, earl of Roscommon, penitent death of	66
Dispersion of mankind no objection to Scripture	222
Dissenters, number of	92
Dissenters making great exertions	342

	Page.
Doctrines, mysterious, of Scripture not to be rejected	219
Deddrige on popish superstitions	360
——— Lectures of, recommended	314
Dryden, quotation from	66
Duelling, unchristian	4
Duncan prayed before he fought	73
Dykern, conversion of	59

## E

East-Indies, conduct of Englishmen in the	190
Edward VI. greatly reverenced the Bible	252
Egypt, prophecies concerning, conclusive	125
Elizabeth, a great lover and reader of the Bible	308
Emmerson, wicked life and unpleasant death of	29
Emperors, Roman, slew 5000 christians daily	223
England, one of the ten kingdoms to fall	158
——— only way of its escaping destruction	159
——— church of, eldest daughter of Rome	183
——— in danger without a reform	197
——— people of, depraved	247
Enthusiasm, lively religion not	325
Erasmus exhorts all men to read the Bible	390
Erskine, a serious christian	86
——— oration of, against Paine	8
——— quotations from	86
Establishments of religion, causes of infidelity	116
Euler, character of	87
——— letters of	316
Europe, inhabitants of	286
Evangelists, have drawn a finished character	307
Evelleigh, quotation from, on prophecy	127

## F

Facts of the Old Testament confirmed by existing circumstances	217
Fenelon, a most admirable character	104
Ferguson, on Daniel's prophecy	187
Fish, species of	335
——— a cod, produces 3,500,000 young at a time	335
Fly, a, brings forth 2000 young at once	335
France, church of, account of	96
——— late king of, a worthy character	164
Franklin an infidel	248
French, tools in God's hand to punish the nations	190

	Page.
French philosophers as cruel as kings or parsons	263
revolution, a tremendous event	263

## G

Gardiner eminent for devotion	20
delivered from the dominion of lust	221
called the happy rake	252
Garzo, edifying death of	322
George II. spent much time in private prayer	73
Germany, Charles V. of, retires from the world	72
Gibbon, death of	34
Gildon, conversion of	47
Gisborne's reflection on Paley	354
Godwin, Mrs. character and death of	279
Gospel, why the deists cannot receive it	34
challenges investigation	167, 312
in England a civil institution	171
use and abuse of the	173
opposers of, its best friends	188
intention of the	221
difficulties of the, no objection to its truth	222
cause of misery to mankind	222
why not published to all nations	224
why permitted to be corrupted	225
Gouge read fifteen chapters of the Bible daily	309
Gray's Key to the Old Testament recommended	209
Grey, Lady, dying present of, to her sister	307
Greeks and Armenians, number of in the world	287
Grew, a great admirer of the Bible	250
Grimstone, eminent for devotion	20
Grotius, a great lover of the Bible	308
death of	60

## H

Haller, death of	62
Halley, a deist through inattention	88
Hall, quotation from	270
Hale, a great admirer of the Bible	250
Halyburton, life of, recommended	201
Hammond	161
Harrington, eminent for piety	20
Hartley on the fall of religious establishments	159
a great admirer of the Bible	250
Hartopp made the Bible his daily study	308
Hatton, dying advice of	300

	Page.
Hell, heathen description of	284
Henry, dying declaration of	4
Heroism, wherein it consists	320
Hervey, death of	76
— answer of to Bolingbroke	210
— spent his last days in praying over the Bible	279
Herschel, vast discoveries of	334
Hesiod, sentiment from	302
Hill, apology of	169
Hoadly wished much for a reformation	177
Hobbes' life and death	26
Hobart, Lady Frances, read the Bible daily	309
Holidays, worse than useless	105
Homilies, opposed to the revolution	181
— recommended by Horsley	301
Hinchcliffe, non-residence of	97
Horace, quotation from	280
Horne, on the iniquity of the country	345
— quotation from	3
Houses, religious, suppressed by Henry VII.	114
Howard, a serious believer	312
Hume, merry death of	33
— an advocate for adultery and suicide	34
— authors who have opposed	34

## I

Ignorance of the middle ages	188
Infidel, enthusiastic, curious account of an	290
Infidelity, owing to the bishops and clergy	98
— spread of, predicted by Newton	116
— danger of	198
— books against	314
— spreading rapidly	313
— cause of	318
Infidels in France spent large sums to spread their principles	196
Infidels and wicked christians much alike	218
— very unhappy and self-condemned	252
Insects, species of	335
Ireland, state of	98
Israel, prophecies concerning, conclusive	125
Italy, a store-house of fire	157

## J

James I, a superstitious bigot	167
Janeway, triumphant death of	327—329

	Page.
Jenyns, conversion of	49
Jerusalem, prophecies concerning, conclusive	123
Jerome, directions of, to read the Scriptures	304
Jesus and his apostles surpassed all the ancients	207
Jewel wished for further reformation	166
——— says Elizabeth refused to be the head of the church	171
Jews, present state of the, a full proof of religion	125
——— number of, in the world	287
Johnson exhorted Reynolds to read the Bible	62, 300
——— suffered by neglecting the Bible	300
——— on the death of Hume	33
——— a good judge of fine writing	300
——— conyinced by reading Law's Serious Call	300
——— death of	61
Jones an unbeliever and convinced	72
——— sentiments of on the Bible	72
——— pious death of	73
Jones on the divine Canon, recommended	122
Josephus on the wickedness of the Jews	187
Judah, prophecies concerning conclusive	125

## K

Kelsey resigned a rectory of 200 <i>l.</i> a year	244
Kempis famous for a devout spirit	330
Kepp's Lectures recommended	314
Kidder endeavoured to procure reformation	167
Kilham, societies of	343
King of England absolute in the church	167
Kingdoms, ten, all to fall at the end of the 1260 years	158

## L

Ladies present to church livings	170
——— who loved and read the Bible	309
Latity, called to defend religion	247
Latimer on unpreaching prelates	109
Levater, predicts the general spread of infidelity	322
——— a firm believer in Christ	322
Law, a monopolizer of preferment	93
——— dying speech of William	200
——— Serious Call of, recommended by Johnson and Gibbon	300
Laws, need improvement	160
Le Clerc, on the authenticity of the books of Moses	211
——— a great admirer of the gospels	310
Lee, execution and penitence of	55

	Page.
Leechman, dying advice of	73
Leighton, character of	106
Leland, death of	71
Leslie's works against infidelity recommended	127
Lewis XIV. an admirer of the Bible	252
Lindsey, resignation of	161
Lyttleton, conversion of	48
Living, church, account of	92
Locke, anecdote of	17
— an advocate for toleration	178
— on the morality of the gospel	271
— declaration of, on the New Testament	321
— death of	322
London, bishop of, an exception to most other prelates	109
Longinus praises Moses and Paul	276
Lord's Prayer, the frequent repetition of, wrong	182
Louis, opinion of, <i>in favour of piety</i>	72
Luc, M. de, confirms the bad end of Voltaire	32

## M

Macclesfield devoted himself to prayer	256
MacLaurin on the Prophecies quoted	136
Madrid, superstitious state of	193
Mohammed and the Pope rose the same year	185, 341
Mohammedans, number of in the world	287
Maintenon, Madame of, experience of	257
Mainwaring on the grandeur of Scripture	275
Malachi, on religious conversation	17
Man of fashion, character of	118
Manufacturers, 200,000, always drinking	281
Marlborough, letter of	63
Mason, dying declaration of	62
Maurice, neglected by his superiors	173
— quotation from	173
Mazarine, dying lamentation of	63
Mede, on the cruelty of the Papists	183
Mediatorship of Christ, doctrine of	210
Melancthon, a persecutor	242
Men, black, no objection to Scripture	222
Messiah, divine mission of proved	125—149
Methodist, a term of reproach for religious people	102
Methodists, number of	92
— making great exertions	342
— increasing	343
— how to check the	344
— account of by Cecil	93

	Page.
Mexico, archbishop of, revenue of the	189
Mill on the variations in the New Testament	215
Milton, a champion for toleration	178
— a devout admirer of the Bible	250
— quotations from 82, 112, 274, 303, 319, 334, 355, 359, 361	361
Minister, prime, presents to many livings	170
Mirandola, a great lover of the Bible	249
— advice of, to his nephew	330
Mirabeau, death of	262
Missions, supported by the poor	13
— account of	288
Montesquieu, quotations from	224, 345
Monopolizers of livings, disguised infidels	342
More, quotations from	267, 268, 286
— an ornament to her sex	331
Moses, character of vindicated	211
— books of, authentic and genuine	211
— confirmed by the history of the East Indies	213
Musculus, soliloquy of, before death	295

## N

Naples, superstition of	193
Nations of Canaan, destruction of the, vindicated	213
Nature's volume should be studied	334
Newcombe's opinion of the Scriptures	215
— literary character	104
Newport, end of	28
Newton, affliction and patience of	29
— anecdote of	87
Newton accounted the Bible to be the most sublime philosophy	258
— entertained an awful sense of God	205
— found the strongest mark of truth in the Bible	316
— dissertations of, recommended	209
— on the endowments of the church	346
— on our national iniquities	344
— wickedness and conversion	49
Nineveh, prophecies concerning, conclusive	125
Nobleman, letter of a	67—70
— declaration of a	257

## O

Objections to the Scriptures answered	161—181
Okely recants his deistical principles	316
Oliver, conversion and death of	50

	Page.
Olympia, death of	72
Oxford, an infidel and hypocrite	248
Ormonde eminent for devotion	20
Ortrey a firm believer	250
Ostervald blames the clergy	98
Owen an advocate for toleration	178
Oxenstiern rests in the Bible	73
P	
Pagans, number of in the world	287
Paine's opinion of the gospel	22
illiterate and immoral	86
on national churches	349
Age of Reason quoted	162
challenged to produce morals equal to the New Testament	815
on national popes	173
a man of natural talents	226
ignorant and malignant	236
attacks the clergy on their learning	227
his character	228
objections to the Scripture answered	229—237
insolence	235
jest of Solomon recommended to	271
persuasion that he is right no proof	282
Paley on subscription	354
account of the Methodists by	93
Papists present to church livings	176
cruelty of	183
number of in the world	287
Parishes in England and Wales	91
Parsons too papistical	104
Pascal reads the Bible with prayer	71
Patronage of livings, view of	173
abuses of	179
Patrick tried a reformation	167
Paul, death of	38
Father, a great student of the Scriptures	308
Persecution a mark of Antichrist	241
sketch of in England	241, 242, 243
Peter, anecdote of	109
Peterborough's eulogium on Fenelon	320
Philosophers, of various sentiments	289
Plato, fine saying of	270
Pluralities of livings, very common	245
Pomfret, quotation from	334
Popocate's character, by Locke	107

	Page
Pope, declaration of	25
— quotations from	66, 225, 257, 278, 304
— a believer	157
Pope of Rome, duration of	155
— of Rome, anecdote of	347
— cruelly treated by the French	186
Popes, number of, in all	156
— virtuous, go to perdition	164
Popery, a grievous curse to Christendom	114
— 660 gross errors in	166
P——t Lord, infidelity and death of	4
Pope, William, infidelity and death of	5
Popish nations, superstition of	193
Porson's account of Gibbon's History	34
Porteus on the Atonement	140
— Redemption recommended	284
Prayers for the king, too frequently repeated	182
Prebends, Canons, &c. account of	93
Preferment, large, not necessary to usefulness	346
— church, abuses in	172
Predictions, Scriptural, conclusive	185
— concerning the Pope	186
Prior, quotation of	24
— on the books of Solomon	278
Pringle, conversion of	49
Priestley considers all vital religion as enthusiasm	326
Priests the curse of Christendom	194
Priesthood, in danger of subversion	195
Protestant states, to fall	164
Protestants, number of in the world	287
Prophets, ancient, vindicated	213
Prophecies, Scriptural chain of	187
— remarkable, concerning the French	262
Propertius, quotation from	279
Prussia, Frederick of, mistaken	312
Psalmist, an admirer of the law of Moses	251
Pythagoras, precept of	302
Q	
Quadrupeds, species of	335
R	
Raleigh, dying advice of	321
Rank, men of, a great pest	197
Reasons for resignation	349—361
K k 2	

	Page.
Rectories, the number of	91
Reformation, prevented the clergy from amassing the wealth of Europe	189
of England, essential to the country	158—168
attended with danger	197
contended for	340—347
Reformers, excellent men, and noble examples	167
Religion, sketch of	19—25
happiness of	317
singularity in, no disgrace	318
the highest honour	318
alone can make us happy	248
attended with safety	328
Religions, of the world, should be compared	285
Renty, read the Bible daily on his knees	299
Repentance, death-bed, dangerous	57
Reyner, a bankrupt, paid his debts	340
Ridley repeated much of the Bible	307
Rittenhouse, a believer	312
Robertson's opinion of Christianity	22
sermon recommended	334
Robinson, a great admirer of the Bible	259
Robert of Sicily, preferred his Bible to his kingdom	252
Rochester, conversion and wickedness of	50—54
Rochester, Bishop of, against all reform	105
Rome's destruction predicted	156
Romaine read nothing but the Bible	310
death of	77
Roscommon, quotation from	277
Rowe died in the faith	278
Rousseau, extraordinary life and death of	44—47, 282
quotations from	207, 260
Rush, a Christian	312
Russel, happy death of	72

## S

Sabbath profaned	247
Salmasius, lamentation of	61
Saville, account of	83
Scaliger, admires a stanza	323
Scott, conversion of	55
quotation from	206
Scotland, kirk of, account of	94
Scriptures, law against reading the	300
Selden, declaration of	73—251
Seneca, quotation from	255

	Page.
Servin's life and death	26
Shaftesbury, some account of	83
Shakespeare's account of purgatory	198, 265, 42
quotations from	42, 88, 284
Sheffield, lines on the death of	66
Sherlock, quotations from	6, 269
Sermons of recommended	284
on the Atonement	140
Shepherd of Salisbury Plain read his Bible daily	311
Sidney, dying advice of	299
Slavery, ancient, common and cruel	190
Slave trade inexcusable	190
Socrates, account of	70
Societies to promote religion	287
Solomon, sermon and experience of	253—256
South, declarations of	280, 346
Spain, king of, lamentation of	63
census of	114
Spaniard's cruelty in America	190
Spencer, sentiments of	330
Spinoza, an atheist	283
Spirit Holy, operations of the, defended by Pearson	324
Sects, number of discoverable	334
Steel on the death of three infidels	66
greatly delighted with the Scripture's	270, 311
Christian Hero of, recommended	320
Sterne's Sermon on Conscience	283
curious-dissolution of	119
Stillingfleet endeavours to procure a reformation	167
Sturnee, conversion of	58
Subscription to the thirty-nine articles, a great hardship	173
when we go to college very young	174
no bishop believes his own	104
Suffolk, Countess of, read the Bible twice a year	309
Swedenborg, strange errors of	240
Letter in defence of, fallacious	241

## T

Taylor, a rare character	10
Temple, account of	1
Tennison, endeavoured to procure reformation	1
Testimonia, Heathen, to the birth of Christ	1
Theology, difficulties in	1
Thomson, quotation from	1
Tillotson, quotation from	1
endeavoured to procure a reformation	162

	Page.
Tillotson on the eternity of future misery	215
——— reprobates the Athanasian creed	356
Tithes, an usurpation	177
Toleration, for many ages unknown	178
——— clergy unfriendly to	241
Toplady's death	294
Tribes, ten, of the Jews, in the East	214
Tronchin confirms the bad end of Voltaire	32
Turk, fall of	341
Tyre, prophecies concerning, conclusive	125

## U

Unbelievers, creed of	117
Universities, English, income of	92
Urick's great diligence in Prayer	61
Usher, a walking library	104

## V

Vanderkemp converted from deism	317
Vegetables, species of	335
Vial, 7th, now pouring out	186
Vico, like unto Moses	358
Vicarages in England and Wales	91
Villages of England	343
Voltaire, unhappy end of	29—32
——— lived laughing, but how did he die?	261
——— dark picture of, the present state of many	201

## W

Wakefield, evidences of Christianity by	210
——— on national churches	349
Waller, eminent for piety	20
Walker, death of	75
Walsingham, reproof of	261
Washington, a Christian	86
Sc——'s dependence on the promises of God	227
Sc—— quotations from	24—225
Sc——atson, quotations from	211
Sc—— objects to the church	24, 85, 184
Sc—— on the mysteries of religion	219
Sc——est, conversion of	48
Sc——vesley spent his life in doing good	312
——— death of	294

	Page.
Wesley, Charles, quotations from	118, 168, 200, 282
Whiston's reasons for the truth of the Bible	205
anecdotes concerning	15, 174, 352
Whitefield, anecdote concerning	343
Wilson declines his seat in the house of Lords	96
works of, recommended	214
Wilson's conversion and voyage	317
Wilberforce, an advocate for religion	247, 331
Williams' wickedness and death	264
William III. constant in prayer and reading the Bible	252
Willis read the Bible eight times	311
Witsius intimately acquainted with the Bible	309
Wolsey's declaration	256
a tyrant over the church	171
Word of God, meaning of the	209
Worms, species of, number of	335
World, depraved state of, before Christ	268—269
men of the, ill judges of what is pleasing to God	16
inhabitants in the, number of	286
Worldling, death of a	16
Wotton, a devout reader of the Bible	308

## Y

Yorke, views of, changed in prison	317
Young, quotations from	21, 199, 200, 251, 256, 279, 312, 314, 326

## Z

Zealots in religion, causes of infidelity	90
Zuinger, soliloquy of, at death	295—296

FINIS.

